

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS/INGLÊS E LITERATURA CORRESPONDENTE

**LEXICOGRAMMATICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF IDEOLOGY IN LETTERS TO
THE EDITOR**

por
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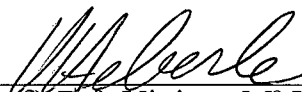
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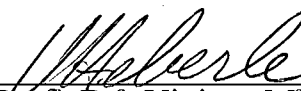


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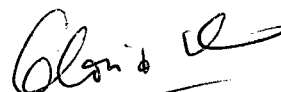


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To Adriano and Rodrigo my beloved sons.

You are examples of obstinacy and
willpower. You are my inspiration.

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Abstract

This thesis examines Ideology in letters to the Editor of three well known magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek* and *Manchete*). Letters to the Editor is a site in the magazines where readers can voice their claims, supporting or denying facts which occur in the social sphere. The corpus is analyzed according to Halliday's (1985) theory of transitivity for the repercussion of ideology in the lexicogrammatical choices, as well as attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives in nominal groups. The results indicate that in the process of expressing personal and subjective thoughts, readers also show inequalities, power and interests which scaffold the social relations, and which seem to be shared by social groups as naturalized beliefs. Letters to the Editor, as all news publications, might also contribute to influence opinions, change the course of events, obscure, denigrate and legitimize "sets of beliefs" which are embedded in the "sociocultural knowledge and social attitude" of current ideologies.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From the time we are born we are exposed to our context, the environment we belong to, such as family, school, community, among others. From this macro context, we receive an amount of stimuli, images, and values, which serve to mold our “self,” our personality. Therefore, at the same time that we are unique as individuals, we may also be the reflection of the context from which we are members. Consequently, the ideological processes of the community we have been exposed to during our existence might scaffold our “sets of beliefs” (Gee, 1990, p. 03) and be signaled in our attitudes, thoughts, values and behavior. However, in the same way that the world influences the individual, the individual also influences the world, as in a cyclical process. But how are ideological processes shaped? How can we analyze traces of ideological principles inherent in the human mind? In order to answer these questions I will present a brief commentary on ideology.

Originally, as explained by Eagleton (1991), “ideology meant the scientific study of human ideas, but fairly soon the object took over from the approach, and the word rapidly came to mean system of ideas themselves” (p. 63). In other words, among all definitions the word ideology has, we could say that it is a “set of beliefs and principles from which someone else deduces conclusions and makes judgments” (Gee, 1990, p. 03). Or using another perspective in the definition, we could say that it “refers to the ways in which signs, meaning and values help to reproduce a dominant social power” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 221). But trying to define and understand ideology is not such an easy task.

During decades talking about Ideology comprised words such as “hegemony,” “social interests,” “classes,” and “struggle,” among others. The reason for using such terminology was due to the fact that ideology was only related to the idea of “fighting for social power.” It is with Gramsci, a Marxist philosopher that the concept of ideology changed from “a system of ideas” to a “lived, habitual social practice” (Gramsci, 1971, cited in Eagleton, 1991, p. 115).

Ideology roughly speaking had, according to Eagleton (1991), two central lineages. The first lineage comes from Hegel and Marx to George Lukás and some later Marxists thinkers who related this concept to ideas of false and true cognition; to ideology as “illusion, distortion and mystification” (p. 03). The other trend of philosophers connected the concept of ideology more with “*the function of ideas within social life* than with their reality or unreality” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 03) (stress added). In this work, the second concept, ideology as the “*functioning of ideas with social life*,” among others, served as the framework for my investigation.

Ideology nowadays has a whole range of useful meanings, which try to encapsulate its scope, such as: “Identity thinking,” “Social necessary illusion,” “The conjuncture of discourse and power” etc, (Eagleton, 1991, p. 02). In the next chapter I will be outlining and arguing in more detail issues related to concepts of ideology.

From this brief overview we could notice that ideology is inextricably bound to people’s thought, history, behavior, values, and beliefs. Therefore, we could say that ideology may contribute to the patterns and rules which govern the individuals’ construction of private and social identities. And these identities, as I will show during the presentation of my research, might appear and be highlighted in the texts analyzed, becoming more complex and visible in gender issues.

1.2 Purpose of the study

In this thesis, I carry out a critical discourse analysis of letters to the Editor from *Time* magazine, *Newsweek* and *Manchete*. I have based my studies in some theories which try to explain some of the functions that involve language. Thus, according to Fairclough (1989),

Language is a form of social practice. Firstly, language is part of society, and not somehow external to it. Secondly, language is a social process. And thirdly, language is a socially conditioned process, conditioned that is by other (non linguistic) parts of society” (p. 22).

Language is also seen as “an instrument of control as well as of communication” (Kress & Hodge, 1979, p. 06), because through the lexicogrammatical choices people make when constructing the discourses, they can manipulate (or try to manipulate) the audience.

I based my research, mostly, in concepts of language such as the previous ones, that is, focusing on the discourse of the letters as a socially constructed instrument, also capable of supporting or changing current ideas. Therefore, I tried to find, in the letters to the Editor analyzed, evidence which could signal and corroborate the fact that language could be used as a manipulative tool, as well as a device to think and behave according to “sets of beliefs” dictated by ideological standpoints. Letters to the Editor have resulted in important sources of information for such investigation, because writers of the letters studied seem to base their discourse, primarily and mainly on their world views, on their ideologies. And, in order to achieve their aims, or to obtain specific purposes writers seem to articulate the discourses to convince the audience about the validity of their propositions.

I intend to investigate how current ideological perspectives emerging from the social sphere are responsible for shaping the discourses in the corpus, in other words, I want to observe how the patterns of behavior, dictated by social norms, may influence and

condition the way the writers of the letters have manipulate their discourses (consciously or unconsciously) in order to support their standpoints and reinforce, or not, social inequalities.

I also investigate in which way (s) the discourses of the letters selected might have contributed to change, influence or suppo^re concepts and thoughts, which were already determined by social rules. Through the lexicogrammatical choices the writers made, I expect to find out and examine possible differences in discourses that could result from the ideological world views the writers might have. In other words, I attempt to analyze in which ways ideology might affect or operate in establishing the writers' choices of vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammar.

In order to analyze the linguistic elements and to show "how linguistic representations are affected by social values, favoring specific views of reality to the detriment of other views" (Fowler, 1996, cited in Heberle, 1997, p. 02), I have used principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Therefore, in this thesis, emphasis is given to the role of critical discourse analysis in aspects related to language while functioning as a constructive tool for expressing ideological perspectives. For the purposes previously established, the following have been the basic research questions answered through my analysis.

- 1) What kind of verb processes, or actions are most frequently used, in the letters analyzed, to express the writers' view of "reality"?
- 2) What relational value do lexicogrammatical features such as attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives may represent in the letters?
- 3) Are gender differences salient or perceptible in letters to the Editor?
- 4) Are letters to the Editor a field of ideological struggles?

1.3 Method

1.3.1 Data

Letters to the Editor are the manifestation of the readers' claims favoring or objecting articles that have already been published. They are the expression of private concerns within a public sphere, selected and edited through the mediation of the "editor." Letters to the Editor are recognized as a genre, a "relatively formalized genre" (Morrison & Love 1996, p. 45) where "writers wish to shape, policy, influence opinion, swing the course of events, defend interests, advance causes" (Haul et al, 1978, cited in Sotillo & Starace, 1999, p. 251). Genres, according to Kress' (1989) definition, are texts which "have specific forms and meaning, deriving from and encoding the functions, purposes and meaning of the social occasions" (p. 19).

Consequently, letters to the Editor are also considered a "highly structured discourse exchange [that is] a central link in shaping of public opinion" (Hall et al., 1978, cited in Sotillo & Starace, 1999, p. 251). In other words, such type of letters are channels which enable the readers of the written press (magazines in this specific research) to express and articulate their ideas, concerns, thoughts, comments, etc., about articles that have already been published, providing in such way a connection between the private and public sphere.

Having in mind that language is the means used to communicate as well as a "device to think and negotiate the social identity" (Gee, 1990, p. 03), the lexicogrammatical choices, in the corpus analyzed, were considered a device through which I could visualize not only the individuals' point of view, but also the way the writers of the letters have identified themselves with the world. Letters to the Editor can also be understood as a genre that "occupies an unusual position in terms of social action" (Miller, 1984, in Morrison & Love, 1996, p. 45).

The characteristic of being a channel for expressing thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and the fact that the letters permeate both private and public domains might help, voluntarily or not, and consciously or not to oppose or to support ideological standpoints which may belong to individuals, their community or the society as a whole.

In order to have precise information of the functioning of the section known as “Letters to the Editor” in the press, I have written to the Editors of three magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek* and *Manchete*) asking for some information about the issue, such as: how they select the letters, how many people work with the selection, how many letters they receive monthly, how many editions they publish monthly. I also asked them to send any additional information they considered important for my study. The only answer I have obtained was sent by “*Time* magazine.”

According to Betty Satterwhite, the Editor of the column “letters to the Editor” of *Time* magazine, letters that provide additional information to their publications, and those which give a personal response to an issue they have raised are the ones selected. Letters with “lively language” and interesting writing are also attractive for their publication. *Time* magazine receives about 1,500 letters each week and they publish approximately 25-30 letters a week. Editing also favors contrasting points of view. For instance, if the magazine receives 10 letters favoring a story and 20 objecting it, the same number of positive and negative views are published. (See appendix for the complete explanation given by Betty Satterwhite).

Furthermore, another important concept that I used as a scaffold for my analysis was that, “language is given to the individual by the society in which he/she lives. It is a key instrument in socialization, and the means whereby society forms and permeates the individual’s consciousness” (Kress & Hodges, 1979, p. 02). Thus, I tried to verify, in my

corpus, aspects which could signal to the influence of the social contexts, and ideologies in the writers' lexicogrammatical choices.

A corpus of 39 letters written by men and women and sent to the editors of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Manchete* was examined. The criteria for the selection of the numbers of the letters varied according to the purpose and sources used in the investigation, as it is explained in the next sub-section.

In order to examine possible ideologies which may underlie and structure gender discourse, I selected letters written by male and female writers, arguing about the same topics, and through a comparative analysis of the lexis and the grammatical choices made by them, I tried to investigate and to expose which patterns are encoded in their discourses, establishing possible differences.

1.3.2 Criteria for the selection of "Letters to the Editor" as data.

The criterion for determining the selection of letters to the Editor as the corpus of my research was based on the next three aspects related to ideology and language. First, as Stubbs (1996) explains, "Texts, spoken and written, comprise much of the empirical foundation of society: they help to construct social realities. Second, textual analysis is a perspective from which to observe society; it makes ideological structures tangible" (p. 20). Following the same line of thought Simpson (1993) points out that "The main aim of a critical linguistic analysis is to examine the ideologies which underlie texts" (p. 114). Third, letters to the Editor as explained by Morrison & Love (1996), provide "a site for non-elite writers to engage in an alternative discourse" (p. 39). Nevertheless, according to Sotillo & Starace (1999) and Morrison & Love (1996), critical discourse analysis (CDA) has paid little attention to the analysis of this genre. According to van Leeuwen (1993), "critical

discourse analysis is, or should be, concerned ... with discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality” (van Leeuwen, 1993, cited in Morrison & Love, 1996, p. 40).

Having in mind the theories stated above, and based on some research already done in this genre (Morrison & Love, 1996; Sotillo & Starace, 1999; Wodak, 1997), I intend to investigate the extent to which the discourses of letters to the Editor can provide a context with a range of important social, economical, and political aspects and views for the examination of ideology and its influence in language. The individual voices of the letters could be the expression of different social contexts, constructing specific discourses within specific social and political worlds. Consequently, the discourse analysis of the letters could be relevant to verify and understand current ideologies and the ways the individuals are “societalized” (Wodak, 1997, p. 61).

The criterion in selecting my corpus (*Time*, *Newsweek* and *Manchete*) as the focus of my analysis was that these magazines are considered serious and important institutions in the written media. Readers and writers of different sociocultural classes have access to the information spread by *Time*, *Manchete* and *Newsweek*. Consequently, I believe, letters to the Editor published in these three magazines could describe, through a critical discourse analysis, a diversity of current forms of “ideological” discourses. “Ideological” discourses in a sense that in order to obtain specific interests they may “mask, naturalize, legitimate” ideas (Eagleton, 1991, p. 202).

The letters of my corpus focus on different subjects: politics, science and famous people (Monica Lewinsky, Bill Clinton, Ken Starr, Mick Jagger among others). And, although the choice was mostly done at random, I also tried to find some letters with contrasting views to make the analysis more revealing and interesting.

1.3.3 Procedures for the analysis

The procedures for the analysis were the following: First, I scanned the texts checking their overall textual organization. Then, I categorized the clauses of each letter in terms of their transitivity choices, according to Halliday (1995) and Thompson (1996). Types of processes and participants were described, analyzed, and compared (intertextually when possible). In order to verify the most frequent processes which appeared in the letters, I initially selected 10 letters, from *Time* and *Newsweek*, at random. The reason for such investigation was to focus only on the “elements” which could be relevant for the purpose of the research. After the result of this selection, I concentrated the study on transitivity, the most important processes and participants, in 39 letters from *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Manchete*. Again, these letters were mostly chosen at random.

A computer program called MicroConcord was also used to verify the verbs most frequently used in the relational processes. Verbs which realize the attributive function and identifying such as “ascriptive” and “equative” were analyzed according to Halliday (1985).

Next, I proceeded to the analysis of the lexical choices to investigate how the writers of the letters encoded their ideologies, values and beliefs in their discourses.

My investigation concerning on the relation between “gender and its social aspects” is based on previous work done in the area such as: Morrison & Love (1996), Heberle (1997), Poynton (1985), Lee (1992), and Sotillo & Starace (1999).

In addition, I tried to find out how discourses may be structured in order to persuade the audience about the writers’ standpoints, about the validity of their proposition. Such investigation, in my corpus, is important because, as mentioned previously, I believe letters

to the Editor are important sources for the analysis of patterns of behavior dictated by ideologies.

For the analysis of the lexicogrammatical choices and argumentation, 29 letters (13 written by women and 16 written by men) were selected according to the number of words to avoid difference in the sample, and consequently in the resulting data. Again, the MicroConcord program was used to verify word frequency.

Considering that the word ideology includes a vast scope, an ample range of philosophical meanings, as the ones I have already presented, in this work I concentrate on the meanings of the term provided by Eagleton (1991), Gee (1990), Fairclough (1989), and Lee (1992), which I believe serve to support and explain the hypothesis raised on this research.

Letters to the Editor as texts, discursive and social practice, are analyzed through Fairclough's (1992) theory of discourse, Halliday (1985) and Thompson (1996). Using their concepts and theories I intend to verify how the writers visualize and encode their worlds, their inner and outer "realities" presented through the participants and processes of the discourses.

1.4 Organization of the thesis

After this introductory chapter, which is intended to give a general overview of the thesis, in the subsequent four chapters I develop theories, explanations, concepts, about the influence of ideology in shaping discourses. The second chapter is called "Ideology and Discourse." It brings general concepts of ideology and how it is related to discourses. The main purpose of this chapter is to show that ideologies may be encoded in any type of discourse, and it may influence the writers' "view of the world."

Chapter three called “Representing the world in the letters to the Editor,” has as main objective to provide, through the analysis of transitivity, evidence to show that ideologies may be responsible for the way the writers represent the world.

Chapter four is a study on the lexicogrammatical choices made in the discourses of the letters. This chapter examines, mainly, how the lexis used by male and female writers served to evaluate a situation, encoding current ideologies in the structuring of the sentences.

Chapter five is a case study of two letters sent to *Manchete* magazine. Both letters focus on the same subject, but through antagonistic views. One letter was written by a female writer and the other by a male writer.

I hope to demonstrate with my research that letters to the Editor are channels to visualize the fact that Ideology, among other definitions stated previously, is “identity thinking” and “the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world.” I also would like to state here that although I try to be objective in my analysis this study may also embed traces of my own personal and social influences, because as Fairclough (1985) explains, “people researching and writing about social matters are inevitably influenced in the way they perceive them” (p. 05).

CHAPTER 2

IDEOLOGY AND DISCOURSE

“Power is not something confined to armies and parliament: it is, rather, a pervasive, intangible network of force which weaves itself into our slightest gestures and most intimate utterances.”
(Foucault, 1977, in Eagleton, 1991, p. 7)

In this second chapter, a general overview on the concepts of ideology and language will be given. I describe and explain a variety of important aspects concerning language and ideology such as the relation between them, how they may interact creating specific forms of discourses, and how they, simultaneously, can shape and be shaped by the social system.

Aspects related to the formation of ideologies such as: “legitimization” and “naturalization,” are also discussed. I do not enter into the philosophical core of both subjects, however, I try to concentrate on definitions and considerations which I believe are essential to enable the readers to follow the perspectives and purposes of my research. Therefore, while developing my explanations related to language and ideology, I focus on the main aspects which I believe are used as the scaffold for supporting my investigation. I start this subject focusing on language in its relationship to the social system.

2.1 Ideology, language and identities.

People from different contexts may construe reality in different ways, because the environment is, in part, responsible for shaping their thoughts, which in turn, shape their language. However, in the same way that the context influences the individuals' language, the individuals language is also responsible for influencing the way the context "thinks."

Hence, we could say that studying language might first enable us to scrutinize individual ideas, thoughts, and behavior, among others. That is, through the analysis of the linguistic elements of an individual's discourse and its context, we can visualize one's private "sphere," the way he/she feels, sees and constructs his/her "world."

Second, studying language might open us horizons to interpret the social theories, the ideologies, which may dictate and control people's behavior, because language reflects not only what goes on within a person's "private domain," but it also reflects current ideological principles, which are responsible for governing and shaping social identities and social acts. Therefore, we could say that language, thought and social environment are bound together forming a "circle," and they are constantly influencing and shaping each other.

Studies relating networks of relationship among language, thought and the social system are dated from more than a century. According to Stubbs (1996), "questions about the relation between language, thought and the world are often traced back to 1757, when the Berlin Academy of Sciences asked: "What is the influence of people's opinions on the language, and of the language on the opinions of people?" (Stubbs, 1996, p. 234). Hence, as we can notice, theories trying to explain and to understand "abstract" aspects hidden behind the observable patterns of language usage have long been the concern of many inquiries and research.

The reasons for such an extensive investigation is not difficult to understand, because the deeper we explain language, the more we understand and interpret people's behavior, their way of thinking, their identities and, ultimately, we could say, human history, because language is the instrument human beings use for thinking, feeling, and for "negotiating their identities" (Gee, 1990, p. 03). But why is ideology and language considered to be bound together?

2.2 Defining Ideology

Ideology is seen as the "entity" responsible for shaping our thoughts, and for establishing our private and social identities, and language may stand as the vehicle for encoding and for "deciphering" such processes. Thus, language is bound to ideology, and ideology is directly related to the individual's conduct, and these relations can be explicit, as "society, language and mind are indissoluble: society creates mind, mind creates society, and language stands as mediator and metaphor for both theses processes" (Halliday, 1977, p. 31).

Emphasizing the importance and relations between language and ideology, Gee (1990) explains that "language is inextricably bound with ideology, and cannot be analyzed or understood apart from it" (p. 06). Therefore, understanding language presupposes understanding ideology. What is Ideology then?

Defining ideology, as I have already mentioned, is not an easy task due to the fact that ideology is interpreted in many different ways, according to different perspectives. Among the innumerable definitions of ideology, Eagleton (1991) provides some are stated below. However, not all of them are compatible with one another. For example, in the list below

the word “set,” “has the meaning of “*any* set,” opposed to “dominant forms” of thought, seen in another definition.

Although some concepts are contradictory, I believe it is worth providing, at this point, this variety of definitions, because first, they belong to current concepts of ideology, and second, because some of them are rounded in concepts of “world knowledge” which have been useful to the purpose of this study. Ideology then can be defined as:

- a) The process of production of meaning, signs and values in society
- b) A body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class
- c) Systematically distorted communication
- d) Forms of thought motivated by social interest
- e) Socially necessary illusion
- f) The conjunction of *discourse* and power
- g) The medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world
- h) The confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality
- i) That which offers a position to the subject
- j) The indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure
- k) The process where social life is converted to a natural reality (p. 01)
- l) Action-oriented *sets of beliefs*
- m) Ideas which help to legitimate a *dominant* political power
- n) Identity Thinking (Eagleton, 1991, p. 02)

Considering the given concepts it is important to notice that ideology nowadays is more concerned with “the function of ideas within social life than with their reality or unreality.” In other words, ideology is more concerned with the social structures than with “true or false cognition” as it used to be (Eagleton, 1991, p. 03).

Thus, if ideology is seen as “ideas within social life,” then language can be focused as “one of the best ways to signal and to visualize such characteristics, as well as to uncover social conventions, which are not open to introspection” (Giddens, 1984, in Stubbs 1996, p. 08).

Among the definitions of ideology given above some are more intrinsically related to my research. *"Identity Thinking," "The process of production of meaning, signs and values in society," "A body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class," "forms of thought motivated by social interest," "the conjunction of discourse and power," "that which offers a position to the subject," "the process where life is converted to a natural reality,"* the definitions presented seem to represent the scaffold for the structuring of the discourse of the letters to the Editor. Such hypothesis is based on the fact that the argumentation of the letters is based mainly in personal world views, in current ideologies. Therefore, the way the writers think and encode their thoughts is the result of their inner and outer world which may embed "forms of thought motivated by social interests," "a body of ideas characteristics of a particular group" (Chapter 2), which are inherent in the ideological process.

Taking into consideration the previous concepts, mainly that language is one of the best ways to signal and to visualize the "ideas within social life" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 03), I have tried to use the letters to the Editor as mechanisms to identify and to analyze aspects related to the writers' ideas, and the influence of the social spheres in the construction of their discourse. For example,

You glorified people who have become grotesquely wealthy and downplayed their negative impact on society. In many cases the detrimental effects have far outweighed any benefits incurred. Sam Walton created a company that has destroyed thousands of small businesses. Ray Kroc and MacDonald's have given us unhealthy, tasteless food and lot of low-paying jobs. Worst of all was your choice of builder William Levitt and Levittown's elone houses. Similar suburban developments have resulted in the paving of thousand of acres farmland and forest. These people were not visionaries; they were opportunists who diminished the American quality of life while enhancing their own personal wealth (Time, Jan 4 1999).

A first reading of this letter to the Editor sent to *Time* magazine shows the fact that the discourse contains more than simple words; it embeds "concepts of thinking," ideas, values

and beliefs which were transformed, as suggested by Eagleton (1991) in “semiotic* phenomenon.” And it is from this capacity of transforming “thought” into “words” that we may ask, among other things, what social aspects are encoded in letters to the Editor. What ideologies are implied? What are the elements in the text which might signal the embedded aspects? These questions will be answered in the next chapters, because the purpose now is only to call the reader’s attention to the fact that simple discourses may imply aspects that can only be retrieved having in mind that “ideology and language are bound together,” as explained in the sub-section 2.2.

In addition to the concepts already seen, another important aspect related to ideologies is presented by Fairclough (1989), when he proposes that, “Ideology is closely linked to language, because using language is the commonest form of social behavior, and the form of social behavior where we rely most on “common-sense assumptions” (p. 02). Common-sense assumptions are considered to be part of ideologies. And this will be my next subject.

2.2.1 Ideology, common sense and power.

What is common sense? In simple terms, it can be seen as “a practical good sense gained by experience of life, not by special duty (Hornby et al., 1963, p. 190). Fairclough (1989) links the term common sense to an “implicit philosophy,” which in varying degrees contributes to sustain unequal power relations, or may also establish and consolidate relations among members of a group.

Ideologically speaking then, common sense assumptions would be the assumptions “which are implicit in the conventions according to which people interact linguistically, and

* Semiotic is defined by Halliday and Hassan (1985) as the “study of sign system – in other words, as the study of meaning in its most general sense” (p. 04).

of which people are generally not consciously aware” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 02). Common sense assumptions are also closely related to “authority and power.” The examples below show such aspect.

Todo mundo sabe que o Paraguai especializou-se em falsificar *tudo*. No Brasil a televisão está mostrando *a toda hora* farmácias vendendo remédios falsificados *aqui mesmo*. Esta facilidade em se encontrar o Viagra não significa que tem muita gente tomando pílula de farinha made in Paraguai, achando que vai provocar ereção (Manchete, Dec. 12 1998).

Todo mundo sabe que, sem a influência e generosa ajuda pecuniária dos EUA, nenhuma ditadura teria se instalado na América Latina. (Manchete, Dec. 12 1999).

In fact, your list might lead people to believe that blacks have made virtually no contribution to shaping our business world. *We all know* better (Time, Jan. 28 1999).

In these examples, the writers’ common sense assumptions are embedded, for example, in the expressions “*todo mundo sabe*,” and “*we all know*.”* Here, the writers might have taken for granted their “authority” in relation to the truth of their propositions, speaking, consequently, in the name of their “ideal” group (*we all*). Therefore, using such construction, at the same time the writers are expressing their authority in relation to their standpoints, they are also showing “power” in relation to the audience.

Nevertheless, common sense assumptions are not always evident in discourse. The claims for “authority” and “power” in a specific discourse may be presented in a tangential way, implicit in the structure of the discourse, as Fairclough (1989) explains,

Ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the texts, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to “textualize” the world in a particular way, and on the other hand lead the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way (p. 85).

* Expressions such as “*todo mundo sabe que*” and “*we all know*” are considered metaphors of modality, according to Halliday (1985, 1994) that is “projecting clauses corresponding to speakers/writers’ opinions” (Halliday, 1985, cited in Heberle, 1997, p. 166).

But how do writers “textualize” their ideologies, their world views? Particular ways of “textualizing” discourses may derive from the choices the writer makes when selecting his/her lexical and grammatical elements. And these choices are considered to be ideologically induced. Thus, if “linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena” (Fairclough, 1984, p. 23), in analyzing the lexicogrammatical choices used in the construction the letters, patterns of behavior, values and beliefs, not only of the writers but of our society might be encoded. To illustrate, in the example below, although the discourse is the expression of only one person, it may also imply values and beliefs of a specific community concerning aspects related to prejudice.

I read with interest your amazing issue on successful entrepreneurs and business executives [Dec.7]. It was certainly one of the best and most informative reports I've ever read. Yet I was frustrated at not seeing an adequate representation of the black achievers. In fact, your list might lead people to believe that blacks have made virtually no contribution to shaping our country business world. We all know better (Time, Jan.4. 1999).

I have been arguing that language influences and is influenced by ideology, and it is through the individual's discourse that we establish parameters to visualize and to interpret the social system he/she belongs to. Therefore, in the analysis of the letters, I try to lay bare the elements of the discourses that could signal possible encoded forms of ideologies, and reflect social phenomena.

In order to achieve such aim, I have also concentrated the analysis of the letters, having as a framework three points, theorized by Stubbs (1996), which are related to ideology and language. First, “*language is itself a social practice, and language actively reproduces and transforms society* (p. 90). Second, “*language is never neutral*” (p. 235) and finally, “*all texts use grammar to persuade*” (p. 94) (stress added). I considered these

aspects relevant to my work, because I believe that discourses of letters to the Editor may be characterized by them.

Another point to be explained is that ideology in my corpus was studied as a matter of “discourse,” rather than “language” used in a general sense. I make this distinction between the two according to Eagleton (1991) for whom “Ideology is less a matter of the inherent linguistic properties of a pronouncement than a question of *who is saying what to whom for what purposes*” (my stress) (p. 09). Thus, in the sentence “*Clinton couldn’t resist the temptation to exploit Lewinsky, and neither could Time*” (Time, April 5, 1999), the important aspect here is to perceive that this sentence has a specific purpose, and the words have specific effects.

Letters to the Editor, as I explained in the introductory chapter, are written texts, which are generally the expression of individual voices, carried out in a public domain, referring to an ideal audience, and dealing with issues of importance to them. Acting in such way, writers may implicitly or explicitly claim for their ideologies. The examples below show some ways in which the writers of the magazines present and evaluate a situation through their own standpoints,

Monica Lewinsky is someone we all love to hate (Time, April 5 1999)

I am soooooo fed up with the umpteenth Time 100 issue (Time, Jan 4 1998)

Monica was aptly portrayed on Time’s cover: a pretty face with a beguiling smile (Time, April 5 1999)

If Lewinsky has any relevance at all, it is the death knell of the public’s belief in the journalist as a person to be listened to (Time, April 5 1999).

Sem dúvida Suzana Alves é muito bonita e talentosa (Manchete, Nov 17 1998).

Few societies are fully prepared for such unexpected shock (Newsweek, March 15 1999).

In expressing their opinions (*we all love to hate, a pretty face with a beguiling smile, bonita e talentosa, few societies are prepared*, for example), the writers of these letters, among other things, may inform, influence, “establish and maintain appropriate social links

with the audience” (Thompson, 1996, p. 38). Consequently, taking the examples above, we may hypothesize that at the same time the writers are evaluating a situation they might also imply persuasion in relation to their standpoints. Simultaneously writers would be contributing, with the power embedded in their discourses, to the reproduction of social patterns, either reinforcing them or “attempting” to a (slow) social change.

In recent research in the genre of letters to the Editor focusing on the aspect of the role of discourses in the letters, Morrison & Love (1996) concluded that letters to the Editor are “*discourses of disillusionment*,” because at the same time that the writers use the news to claim their standpoints, their “disillusionment,” they do not have the expected response. Sotillo & Starace (1999) corroborate Morrison & Love’s investigation in a recent work called, “Political discourse of a working-class town.” Such type of discourse, they explain, is mainly characterized by a “problem 1 non-solution” (Morrison & Love, 1996, in Sotillo and Starace, 1997, p. 271). Therefore, according to these studies, writers of the letters to the Editor express their opinions, beliefs, and thoughts in the evaluation of a subject, but their claims seem to have no “visible” impact or “immediate” answer.

Nevertheless, claims which may appear to be neglected may also, gradually, destabilize social concepts contributing to social changes because, as I mention previously, language “actively reproduces and *transforms* society” (Stubbs, 1996, p. 90) (my stress). Thus, even in discourses considered “opaque” or “naïve,” people may be slowly “legitimizing” or “obscuring” social values. And this is another important aspect related to ideology which could possibly be applied to the letters to the Editor.

2.2.2 Ideology and the legitimization and naturalization of power.

How do beliefs and values become “legitimized” to be considered ideologies? Ideology, as we have seen, is related to questions of “power,” and power may be “established” in six different ways to become “legitimized.” The process is explained below,

A dominant power may legitimate itself by *promoting* beliefs and values congenial to it, *naturalizing* and *universalizing* such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; *denigrating* ideas which might challenge it; *excluding* rival forms of thought and *obscuring* social reality in ways convenient to itself (Eagleton, 1991, p.05).

Therefore, “promoting,” “naturalizing,” “universalizing,” “denigrating,” “excluding” and “obscuring” are the stages which would interact in the formation of ideologies. But two concepts are assumed by Eagleton to be central to the idea of ideology: “obscuring,” and “naturalizing” social reality. And I believe that letters to the Editor, eventually, might contribute to legitimize and naturalize social realities. For example

A expressão “mulher objeto” saiu de moda. Mas as mulheres-objetos estão cada vez mais em alta (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).

Sobre a lista das cem mulheres mais desejadas deste século na Manchete, acho que não há como questionar o resultado (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).

Pinochet fez muito pelo Chile. Foi, para o seu país, o que Médici foi para o Brasil. Acho que todo mundo tem direito de errar (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).

Todo mundo sabe que o Paraguai especializou-se em falsificar tudo (Manchete, Mar 10 1998).

Populist politicians must understand that the world is now a different place. We must take actions and measures required to compete in the new world order. We do not need 60-year-old men leading our destiny into the 21st century. What we need is a young, aggressive leader with a fresh vision (Newsweek, Jan 18, 1999).

Geralmente os jogadores de futebol são alvos fáceis (Manchete, Dec 12, 1998).

The segments of the letters above, as we can notice, express the writers’ personal beliefs and evaluations. Nevertheless, the lexicogrammatical choices made by the writers in the construction of these sentences seem to embed a struggle to promote, naturalize, denigrate, and obscure “social realities in a way convenient” to the writers’ argumentation, to support

their ideologies. Consequently, “*jogadores são alvos fáceis*,” “*what we need is a young aggressive leader*,” “*o Paraguay especializou-se em falsificar tudo*,” “*todo mundo tem direito a errar*,” “*as mulheres-objeto estão cada vez mais em alta*,” etc, are subjective “sets of beliefs.” However, at the same time that the power masked in each discourse promotes the writers’ personal thoughts, it could also slowly contribute for the legitimization and naturalization of “ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class,” as explained before.

Among the ideological discourses found in the corpus, “political standpoints,” “sexual power” as well as “gender roles” are relevant in the texts analyzed. In the examples below we can notice how the writers, through language, seem to articulate their ideologies.

Just as society may not exist in isolation without medicine, medicine may not exist apart from society. They are forever interdependent. Achievement in the medical sciences must run parallel with the will of society. There must be more emphasis in the medical research on the effective delivery of health care, rather than on the raw sciences that stresses longevity and seek to serve only to the privileged few (Time, Feb 01 1999).

It is disgraceful that individuals on both sides of the impeachment debate ruined the life of Monica Lewinsky, a decent if politically unsophisticated young woman. She is not one of the people who hurt the country. Her only real “crime” was to insist on controlling her own Sex life. Ordinarily, I would be critical of a newsmagazine’s neglecting major news issues to spotlight a minor celebrity. But I am happy you gave Monica a chance to defend herself. Perhaps her book profits will partly compensate for all the harm the government has unjustly caused her (Time, April 5 1999)

The two letters above express “sets of beliefs.” But, as Eagleton (1991) explains, “not every rigid set of ideas is ideological” (p. 05). For instance, quarrel between couples over who burned the toast cannot be considered ideological. However, when it “begins to engage questions of sexual power, beliefs about gender roles,” then it can be seen as ideological. The difference relies in those facts “which are central to the whole of social life and those which are not” (p. 08). Taking the examples above we can notice that they talk about social

facts (the relation of science and humans in the first letter and people's social attitude in the second).

Observing the lexicogrammatical choices made in these two letters we notice that the writers stress values and world views, emphasizing aspects they believe to be important for supporting and making effective their argumentation (“may *not* exist, *disgraceful*, *decent*, *forever* interdependent, *unsophisticated* young woman, may *not* exist,” etc.). Consequently, we can give support to the concept that “language always provides different ways of describing a common world” (Stubbs, 1996, p. 17). And it is the individual's ideological position he/she may assume in life which might be responsible for the way he/she “perceives” and “codifies” the world.

In addition, words such as, *privileged few*, may embed, for example, a political discourse, signaling to the fact that in our society only “few” people have the power; the “privilege” to access important things. In the same way, the sentence, *her only crime was controlling her own Sex life* may encode a “feminist” form of discourse; a claim against gender inequalities existing in our society. In both sentences it seems to be the “promotion” of beliefs in order to defend world views and power relations.

2.2.3 Ideology and gender discourse

On investigating ideology, we are brought to a variety of perspectives which are the result of the “identities” individuals assume in the social world. Among these social identities, gender differences have become an important subject of research, mainly in aspects concerning the relationship between language and gender (See for example Lee, 1992; Coates, 1993; Heberle, 1997).

Giving an overview on language and gender, Lee (1992) explains that,

Early work on the topic was strongly influenced by two prevailing strands of thoughts in linguistics. The first had to do with the traditional concerns in the discipline with questions of structures rather than usage, based on a view of language as a homogeneous object. The second strand is the determinist of the relationship between language and cognition deriving from Whorf.* (Lee, 1992, p. 132).

Nowadays new perspectives on these issues have been raised. Therefore, instead of considering language a “homogeneous entity” as seen above, Lee (1992) explains that language has the notion of “*linguistic behavior*” (my stress). And, considering that “gender relations are antagonistic” (Ballaster et al., 1991, p. 20), this reality should be expected to be shaped in the male and female “linguistic behavior,” in their forms of discourse.

Following this line of thought, Poynton (1985), argues that “biological sex (identification as female or male) needs to be distinguished from social *gender* (identification as feminine or masculine), since the latter is not an automatic consequence of the former” (p. 04) (original emphasis). According to Poynton, there are appropriate behaviors for males and females dictated by society, which are not related to those biological differences (such as pregnancy, and lactation in women). And these “norms” she explains, vary from society to society. Therefore, she suggests that “gender is a social creation” (p. 04), and evidence of such aspect might be found in the linguistic forms used in the construction of a discourse. Difference in gender discourses, then, would be important in the understanding and the establishment of social identities and social realities.

Gender differences based on ideological principles, among the variety of factors which may influence language, were mostly noticed in sexist discourses, originating the hypothesis that there would be a “pervasive ideology tending to downgrade, marginalise and exclude women” (Lakoff, 1975, cited in Lee, 1992, p. 110). A great variety of material

* “The idea that language is intimately involved in the way that we perceive the world was taken up in a rather

on sexist discourses were plentifully found in newspaper reporting. The examples below demonstrate the principles which have governed the journalistic practice in relation to this issue.

1. All people are male unless proven female.
2. A woman's relationship to a man (or men) is her defining identity.
3. A woman's appearance always requires comment, whether she defies or exemplifies a popular stereotype.
4. A woman can safely be identified as "his wife," it is unnecessary to identify her by a name.
5. After marriage, a man remains a man and a woman becomes a wife.
6. Homemaking and parenting are not work (Ward, 1984, cited in Lee, 1992, p. 111).

Nowadays, perhaps, the social identities assigned to men and women are not so arbitrary and explicitly noticed in gender discourses as seen above, but I believe they have not fallen into total disuse. Ideology may still be responsible for shaping attitudes, behavior, and thought, among other characteristics, in gender discourses, and language enables us to identify such differences. Thus, as investigated and discussed by Halliday, (1978), Kress (1989), and Gee (1990) "language is not just to communicate information. Language is, in addition, also a device to think and feel with, as well as a device with which to signal and negotiate social identity" (Gee, 1990, p. 78). And, letters to the Editor, as this work intends to show are important instruments for investigating social identities and social realities.

Among the ideological aspects studied in my research, differences in the "social identities" writers assume seem to be the generator of most of the antagonistic discourses. And such differences are more perceptible in the way women/men encode their thoughts and express their world views. Thus, in my corpus, letters written by women seem to present social "realities," mainly people and sentiments (as it will be presented in the next chapter), through a subjective and personal focus, evidencing traces of "emotionality."

different context by the American linguist Benjamin Worf" (Lee, 1992, p. 27).

Analysis on attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives, seem to corroborate such hypothesis. However, it is important to have in mind that in the process of selecting the letters, the Editor may also contribute to reinforce, sustain and perpetuate the ideological presupposition that there is a stereotype for women's language and women's behavior.

In order to exemplify my argumentation, I will give now two examples of letters, one written by a man and the other written by a woman, evaluating the same problem but in a divergent way, with a different focus.

Guess where most of the genetically perfect kids, developed as a result of gene insertion, will go? Straight to full-time day care, so their parents can pay-off the \$50,000 spent to have them. If kids are perfect, we can turn to the pharmaceutical companies to help us cope with this horrific life through various drugs. Having kids is about unconditional love, and life is about struggle. But in the future, it could be that happiness will lie in kids- only the perfect ones.- and in prescription drugs that costs a lot of money (Helleren, Time Feb 1 1999).

After reading your articles on biotechnology and the future of medicine [Jan.11], I realize that for better or for worse, genetic engineering is now a permanent fixture in our daily life. Its potential to benefit society is great. However, many have decided that genetic engineering is unethical and immoral. We should remember that any knowledge can be used for evil and unethical purposes. It's not the field of genetic engineering that's unethical but how we make use of the new development (Andrew, Time Feb 1 1999).

We do not need a careful reading to realize that these two letters have contrasting standpoints which seem to be articulating specific interests. Each writer has his/her world view which influences the way he/she encodes thoughts. Thus, in both letters there are adjectives and numeratives stressing the writers' world views. In the same way abstract words are found in both letters. Nevertheless, comparing the selection of words such as *unconditional love*, *happiness*, *struggle*, *horrific*, *perfect* written in the first letter and *permanent fixture*, *unethical purposes*, *immoral* written in the second, it seems that the first discourse relies more on "emotional" appeal than the second one. Why do we have such different perspectives?

Ideology, as discussed, “offers a position to the subject,” and “action-oriented sets of beliefs” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 02) which seem to be responsible for the way the discourses of the two letters are structured. Thus, the first letter could be written either by a man or a woman. However, the fact that it was written by a woman signals to the fact that ideology might shape “gender identities” and could also justify concepts such as, “being a woman (or a man) is a matter, among other things, of talking like one” (Wodak, 1997, p. 28).

2.3 Decoding discourses

Up to now I have been arguing about the written expressions of the writers’ thought. But, as important as “encoding” (made by the writers) we have the process of “decoding” the discourses (made by the audience).

“Decoding” discourses implies that the audience has to make a connection between what is within the discourse and the “world.” As Fairclough (1989) puts it:

The producer of the text constructs the texts as an interpretation of the world, or the facets of the world which are then in focus; formal features of the text are traces of that interpretation. The traces constitute cues for the text interpreter, who draws upon her assumption and expectations (incorporated in frames) to construct her interpretation of the text (p. 80).

For instance, if readers of the two previous letters are asked to make an early guess in the process of interpretation (through the traces given), whether the writer of the first letter is a man or a woman, I believe the answer would probably be: a woman. The reason for such choice may rely on the “traces” found in the letters, which lead to the system of ideas surrounding the roles of women in the social sphere. In other words, it is the “common sense assumption” that is implicit in the social conventions establishing that women are expected to be mothers, and to worry about the destiny of their children (*having kids is*

about unconditional love), plus the fact that “being a woman is talking like one” that may induce the readers to guess, and to interpret, correctly, that the first letter was written by a woman. Therefore, in addition to the writers’ beliefs, thoughts, and values used in the construction of an ideological discourse, we also have the audiences’ (which may function as a community) ideologies contributing to the interpretation of that specific discourse.

In this chapter I have presented theoretical aspects related to ideology and language, which I consider important for supporting my analysis of the letters. In the next chapter I start the discourse analysis of my corpus in order to provide evidence for answering the initial questions I have raised, mainly to show how ideologies can be encoded in specific types of discourses. Therefore, the next study focuses on concepts on meaning and on ways writers use in the construction of their discourses to shape and represent their worlds.

CHAPTER 3

REPRESENTING THE WORLD IN LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Introduction

What is meaning? Among the variety of definitions this term may have, Gee (1990) explains that “meaning is always a choice about which other words and phrases a word is used in relation to, what other words and phrases it will be taken as excluding or not as applicable, and what the operative and relevant context will be taken (assumed) to be” (p. 85). Thus, it can be said that language is not organized arbitrarily, it is rather used as a “system,” in specific ways to convey specific meanings (Halliday, 1985).

This “organization” is called by Halliday “the linguistic system,” and each of its elements is explained in relation to the functions it occupies within the entire system. Consequently, according to Halliday (1985), the fundamental components of meaning in language are known as the “functional components” (p.xiii), and the observation of the “functional grammar” will enable us to understand and to explain how language is used.

In this chapter, I present a basic theoretical framework based on Halliday’s (1985) systemic-functional grammar which is essential to my research. First, I provide an overview in Halliday’s theory of “meaning.” Second, the “representational meaning” (Halliday, 1985) is presented through the study of “transitivity” with a discussion on “material and mental processes.” In the third sub-section, “forms of argumentation” related

to mental processes are discussed. The fourth sub-section is the presentation of “relational processes.”

3.1 Halliday’s theory of meaning.

According to Halliday’s (1985), “all languages are organized around two main kinds of meaning, the “ideational” or “reflexive” and the “interpersonal” or “active.” And these elements are called “metafunctions.” These metafunctions are “realized throughout the grammar of a language” (p. 179). Combined with these elements, a “third one called “textual” appears, giving emphasis to the previous ones” (p.xiii).

Whereas the “ideational” component is related to the understanding of the environment, what the clause is about, the “interpersonal” represents the relation established among the participants of the environment; the clause here is seen as an exchange. The “textual” is the third component of this chain, and the clause here is analyzed as message.

In addition, sentences have a primary function, which can be separated and analyzed but they are also “multifunctional,” explained by Halliday and Hasan (1985) as:

Every sentence in a text is multifunctional; but not in such a way that you can point out to one particular constituent or segment and say this segment has just this function. The meanings are woven together in a very dense fabric in such a way that, to understand them, we do not look separately at its different parts; rather, we look at the whole thing simultaneously from a number of different angles, each perspective contributing towards the total interpretation. That is the essential nature of a functional approach (p. 23).

Consequently, it can be said that language is built as a system, and meaning is not taken in isolation, but it is constructed from the conjunction of the variables which form this system. And in functional grammar, Halliday (1985) interprets language as a “system of

meaning,” as opposed to isolated words, and tries to show how meaning is expressed in order to achieve its objective, in a specific “context of situation.”

Ideology, in my view, could be seen within the “conjunction of variables” mentioned above, as a crucial factor in the construction of meaning because, as already defined, ideology is “the process of production of meaning, signs and values in society” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 03).

When talking about “context of situation,” Halliday and Hasan (1985) explain that “meaning is realised in language (in the form of texts), which is thus shaped or patterned in response to the context of situation in which it is used” (p. 03). And texts are both the result of a “product” and a “process” (Halliday and Hassan, 1985), product considering that it is an output, and process because there is a set of choices in the meaning potential of the language.

In the previous chapter I argued that ideology may be responsible for the way people encode their thoughts. And, it is through the process of decoding that we have access to the individuals’ inner world. Here, thought is seen as “meaning” which is viable through a “text.”

As I mentioned previously, there is a close relation between meaning and the social system, in the sense that distinct communities share different interpretations in the choice of the “meaning process.” I also explained that “ideology is a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 03). Therefore, knowing the “context of situation” of a particular discourse, then, is very important for the interpretation of the “product,” and for a possible visualization of forms of thoughts motivated by certain social communities. Therefore, the analysis of the letters to the Editor written to *Time*, *Manchete*

and *Newsweek*, for example, become relevant if we consider that they are products resulting from specific contexts possibly showing ideas of particular groups.

According to Halliday & Hasan (1985), we can divide the environment in which meaning is exchanged in three ways: “The Field of Discourse,” “The Tenor of Discourse,” and “The mode of Discourse.”

Field in a discourse is related to “what it is about,” the Tenor of discourse “characterizes the relationship among the personal involved,” and finally, the Mode of discourse is related to the “role assigned to language.” We can visualize, in the figure below, how this entire chain of the linguistic system works.

CONTEXT OF SITUATION	SEMANTICS	LEXICOGRAMMAR
Feature of the context Semiotic structure of situation	Language Function functional component of semantics	(rank: clause) lexicogrammatical choices
Field of Discourse (what is going on) the ongoing social activity	Ideational meaning ideational content	transitivity structure clause as representation
Tenor of discourse (who is taking part) the role relationship involved	Interpersonal meanings personal interaction	mood structure clause as exchange
Mode of Discourse (role assigned to language) symbolic or rhetorical channel	Textual meaning textual structure	Theme structure clause as message

Table 3.1 “Context of situation, semantics and lexicogrammar” (from Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Halliday, 1973; Ventola, 1988 in Heberle, 1997, p. 12).

Thus, in order to investigate to what extent ideology is responsible for shaping discourses in the letters to the editor analyzed, this study focuses on the “ideational meaning.” According to Halliday (1985), a clause is a combination of three structures: Ideational (clause as representation of the world), Interpersonal (clause as exchange), and Textual (clause as message), “the basic text structure and cohesion” (Bloor, 1995, in Heberle, 1997, p. 13). It is through the analysis of the transitivity system (Halliday, 1985;

Thompson, 1996) that I investigate one of the aspects of the “multifunctional” meaning encoded within the discourse of the letters to the Editor: the “experiential meaning.” Focusing on the experiential meaning enables us to visualize the way the writer refers to the “entities of the world, and the ways in which those entities act on or relate to each other” (Thompson, 1996, p. 76). Transitivity then, through the processes and participants represents the “goings-on” what the clause is about. Experiential meaning and logical meaning (language as the expression of general logical relations) are part of the “ideational meaning” (some aspects of logical meaning are presented when I discuss “nominal groups”).

3.2 Analysis of transitivity features in the corpus.

Transitivity is defined by Halliday (1985) as part of the grammatical system by which we can apprehend the impressions of experience, the “goings-on,” “happening, doing, sensing, meaning, and being and becoming” (p. 106), sorted in the grammar of a clause. Heberle (1997) discussing transitivity points out that it “has been used by critical discourse analysts to interpret and criticize the ideological implications of discursive events in relation to the linguistic choices regarding types of processes, participants and circumstance” (p. 100).

A primary analysis of ten letters selected at random from *Time* (April, 5 1999) to investigate the most frequent processes used by the writers showed that from 71 processes involved in the discourses of the letters analyzed 21 were *relational*, 13 were *mental*, 33 were *material*, and only 4 were *verbal*. Behavioral processes were not found.

The letters below represent the reader’s opinions and feelings in relation to the love affair between the President Bill Clinton and his secretary Monica Lewinsky. During

months the fact was published in newsmagazines as a major issue, and letters as the ones below showing support or objection to the case were sent to the Editor of *Time*. Although the purpose of these letters here is only to verify the most common processes used, it is interesting to notice the different standpoints readers had in relation to the fact. Thus, at the same time that Monica is seen as a “minor celebrity” she is also presented as “someone we all love to hate.” And words such as “scared,” “vixens,” “candidness,” “self-centered,” “honesty,” “narrow view” and “empathy,” which have antagonistic meanings, are used to describe the same person.

Much like a soap-opera character, Monica Lewinsky *is* someone we all *love to hate* [March 15]. When I *read* your article, however, my disdain *was tempered* by an unexpected admiration. She *has lived* out a fear most of us only *dream* about – suddenly *finding* oneself naked in public. What *struck* me *was* how Monica *was able* to *defend* herself without *seeming* defensive. This ability *allowed* her to *appear* poised, intelligent and charming – so much so that many people *commented* they could finally *understand* what the President *saw* in her. While I do not *admire* Monica for her self-centered, narrow view of the world, I do *respect* her courage to *stand* her own ground.

Clinton couldn't *resist* the temptation to *exploit* Lewinsky, and neither could Time.

If Bill Clinton, Kenneth Starr, Linda Tripp and Monica Lewinsky all *worked* on car lots, I would *buy* my automobile from Monica.

What's sad is the report from a friend who *is* still *teaching* high school English. The Monica tell-all *was* the talk of the 10th grade class. The reason? It *was* “cool.”

It *is* disgraceful that individuals on both sides of the impeachment debate *ruined* the life of Monica Lewinsky, a decent if politically unsophisticated young woman. She *is* not one of the people who *hurt* the country. Her only real “crime” *was* to *insist* on *controlling* her own Sex life. Ordinarily, I would *be* critical of a newsmagazine's *neglecting* major news issues to *spotlight* a minor celebrity. But I *am* happy you gave Monica a chance to *defend* herself. Perhaps her book profits will partly *compensate* for all the harm the government *has* unjustly *caused* her.

We *hope* Monica will *share* her royalties with the President to *help* him *pay* his legal bills. After all, she couldn't *have got* where she *is* without him.

What *impresses* me most about Monica is her candidness, composure, honesty and personal strengths. I *am* amazed at her ability to *articulate* her thoughts and feelings in these interviews. Although the affair *was* a mistake, I *have* great empathy for her and her family. She *has paid* her price, and now we must look at ourselves. It's time we just *left* her alone.

After *watching* the interview on 20/20 and *reading* your article, I *believe* that Monica *is* a very hurt, very confused woman who *made* a mistake – a mistake that many women *have made* before her. And though we *tend* to *shun* such women and *call* them vixens, I *believe* this case *is* a perfect opportunity to *look at* how these women actually *feel*: alone, scared and unloved.

Monica was aptly *portrayed* on *Time* 's cover: a pretty face with a beguiling smile, which *proved* to be flimsy and *have* little of substance behind it and, above all, *has come* too close for comfort.

It's simply astonishing how the Republicans *succeeded* in *selling* the Clinton-Lewinsky affair as if it *were* between two terrestrial beings with an alien conformation and not two rather ordinary people with – as far as we *know* – the normal equipment.

Here is a summary of the verbs which form the processes, found in the letters above:

Relational	Mental	Material	Verbal
Be, seem, appear have got, have.	Love, hate, strike, understand, admire, respect, resist (temptation), neglect, hope, impress, believe, feel, know.	Read, temper, live, dream, find, defend, see, allow, stand, exploit, succeed, work, buy, teach, ruin, hurt, insist, control, spotlight, defend, compensate, cause, share, help, pay, look at, leave, watch, read, make, shun, portray, come, sell.	Comment, articulate, call, say.

Table 3.2 Processes found in the 10 letters analyzed.

Based on the result (verb processes) of this first pilot analysis, I decided to concentrate the study of transitivity mainly in three processes described by Halliday (1985) as the three principal types of processes *Material, Relational and Mental* (p. 138), which were also the most frequent ones found in the analysis shown above.

For the analysis, I start presenting a theoretical overview of the three processes in order to show their importance in my research that is to demonstrate how the “world” has been represented in the letters. Ideology, as explained in chapter 2, is “the medium in which conscious actors make sense of their world” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 03). Therefore, through processes and participants I expect to verify how the writers understand their social “reality” and represent their world views.

3.2.1 Material processes

Activities related to physical actions such as running, cooking, playing, and so on, according to Halliday (1985) and Thompson (1996), are called “material processes.” This is the process of “doing,” and the entity that does the “deed” in this type of action is called “Actor” (Halliday, 1985, p. 109). For example:

I	read	your article (Time, April 5 1999)
Actor	material process	Goal

(Eu)	recebi	denúncias (Manchete, Nov 10 1999)
Actor	material process	Goal

According to the analysis of the selected letters to the Editor, material processes are relevant for understanding the physical actions involved in the discourses because they have “framed” the “goings-on” involving the entities, and the actions discussed by the writers.

As has been pointed out, letters to the Editor seem to be written, mainly, in order to support ideological standpoints; and in the texts studied the “world” is focused, primarily, through the writers’ perspective of feelings, thoughts, opinions, and concerns. However, in order to discuss about their point of views writers also support their argumentation presenting the entities and things within the “reality” of the outgoing world. This reality has been represented by the “doings,” the material processes which serve to describe the entities and things involved in the discourses. For example,

Apenas quero *aplaudir* o genial oportunismo da nossa garota dourada (Manchete, Feb 15 1999).
What is said is the report from a friend who *is still teaching* high school English (Time, April 5 1999).

Monica *will share* royalties with the president to help him pay his legal bills (Time, April 5 1999).
I *began* my shopping in November and have found services that have been outstanding (Newsweek, January 18 1999).

You *devoted* seven pages of your Dec. 14 issue to *regale* Newsweek readers with tales of Nicole Kidman *jumping* out of airplanes and *driving* go-carts (Newsweek, January 18 1999).

(...) as your article on eugenistic *made* abundantly *clear* (Time, Feb 1 1999).

O bafafá *provocado* por este caso dela com Sasha, por exemplo, *deve estar valendo* pontos e mais pontos no Ibope. (Manchete, Feb 15 1999).

In the instances of material processes in italics above (*estar devendo*, *began shopping*, *jumping*, etc), the *Actors* (the entities that perform the actions) are either the writer him/herself (*Eu* apenas, *I* began), or other entities which appeared in the press such as Monica Lewinsky, Nicole Kindman, a friend, You (referring to the magazine staff). In the letters analyzed, most of the Actors' "deeds" seem to be presented not only as "real" facts, but situations described through the evaluation of the writers' own standpoints (aplaudir o *genial* oportunismo, *valendo pontos e mais pontos*, made *abundantly* clear). These material processes seem to show that ideology has "offered a position to the subject" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 03), and the facts are described through this position. Such characteristic, in all the letters to the Editor analyzed, are frequently noticed.

In the last sentence the Actor is represented by an abstract entity (o bafafá). The "doer" of this action is unknown, for it represents an action. This sentence is known as a "metaphorical mode of expression" (Halliday, 1994 in Heberle, 1997, p. 127). Such type of construction which does not follow the "typical way of saying things" (Halliday, 1985, p. 343), may contribute to reinforce and make the ideas more meaningful.

Material processes in the corpus analyzed framed most of the writers' positive and negative actions which were perceived in the material world. Here are some examples found in the letters.

Material verbs with positive connotation in the clauses	Material verbs with negative connotation in the clauses
Aplaudir, defend, stand, stress, run, accept, promote, write, build, devote, succeed, defend bump, share, make, valer, help, meet, prove, look at, watch, move, maintain, keep, repairing	Exploit, ruin, falsificar, control, insist, cause, shun, provocar, valer, conceive, spare, relegate, own, avoid, censure, force, launch, end up, aposentar, hurt, strike, neglect, destruct, admit, hang, exacerbate, condemn, conjure up, instigate, assassinate, shoot, ignore

Table 3.3 Examples of material verbs.

The Actors of the material processes found in the letters, as I explained previously, are basically people presented in the magazines or the writers of the letters. For instance, some facts are described in the first person such as: “I have done, I have avoided, I have been shopping, gostaria de aplaudir, I have found, I have read, I met.” The Actors of these expressions are the own writers. However, in many occasions the Actors of the sentences are people that appeared in the magazines such as Monica Lewinsky, for example, “She defends, she stands, she lives, she dreams.” Considering that the letters from my corpus have a variety of subjects, Actors and Goals are also found in a great gamut.

The material verbs found in the letters to the Editor analyzed become more important when they are preceded by words which give them a personal and subjective connotation such as, “suddenly finding, aptly portrayed, safely watched, continually experience, self-destruct, ever read, normally provides.” Such expressions at the same time that stress the argumentation they signal to the writers’ world views.

If on the one hand the analysis of the letters shows that material processes are relevant for the “doings” in the argumentation, “relational” and “mental” processes appear frequently in the corpus studied, indicating that they also form the scaffold for the development of the writers’ ideas. Therefore, I may say that mental and relational processes are also important for establishing writers’ ideologies in the discourses of the letters analyzed. But what are mental and relational processes?

3.2.2 Mental processes

Mental processes according to Halliday (1985) are those of “sensing, feeling and perceiving” (p. 114). In other words, mental processes deal with “the appreciation of the world” (Banks, cited in Heberle, 1997, p. 106). Differently from the material processes, mental processes do not occur in the environment (the visible world), but they are the result of the writers’ manifestation of the internal world; the way they perceive the facts which go on in their surroundings. And in the discourse of the letters, facts seem to be described after being filtered by writers’ ideologies as “action-oriented sets of beliefs” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 03).

In mental processes as conceptualized by Halliday (1985), we find a human participant or “*Sensor*,” who is someone “endowed with consciousness,” which enables him/her to feel, to think or to perceive the things. In other words, “the person in whose mind the mental process is undergoing” (Thompson, 1996, p. 82). But objects can also be treated as “conscious entities” as long as consciousness is credited to these specific objects. While in material processes we have the “Goal,” in the mental we have the “Phenomenon,” that which is “sensed, felt, thought or seen” (Halliday 1985 p. 117). For instance,

I	would have enjoyed	your items and photograph
Sensor	mental process	Phenomenon

Here are some more examples of mental processes taken from the magazines,

Ninguém *pode negar* que a Xuxa tem um carisma fantástico (Manchete, Feb 15 1999).

Não *aguento* mais ver a Xuxa usando sua barriga para se auto-promover. Será que vocês não *sabem* o verdadeiro significado de ser mãe? (Manchete, Feb 15 1999).

We *hope* Monica will share her royalties (Time, April 5 1999).

I *would have enjoyed* your item and photograph (Newsweek, January 18 1999).

I *believe* this case is a perfect opportunity to look at how these women actually feel. (Time, April 5 1999).

In most of the sentences above the *Sensor* is the own writer, “*Não aguento (eu), I enjoy, I believe.*” These mental processes make clear that the writers are expressing their own feelings and thoughts. Nevertheless, even in sentences such as “*we hope Monica will share her royalties,*” where the audience is included as the *Sensor* (we), or sentences where the *Sensor* is unknown, “(Fale) *quem quiser falar, mas ninguém pode negar,*” again the mental processes seem to be the result of the writers’ own thoughts and argumentation.

In the letters analyzed the *Sensor* is often the own writer, for example

I believe this case is a perfect opportunity (Time, April 5 1999)

We can make wise judgments (Time, Feb 1 1999)

Ter o desejo sexual, mas não realizar o sexo traz alguma felicidade? Bom, *acredito que dê algum sentimento de auto-afirmação, a sensação de ainda não ter morrido, de estar assim tão velho. Acho que talvez os organismos alquebrados reajam bem, se os velhinhos conseguirem aproveitar este lado positivo da pílula.* (Manchete, June 25 1999).

In the letters to the Editor studied, many mental processes are used, and they enable the “articulation” of the information. This articulation may be evidenced, in the corpus, in the sense that “reality” projected by the discourses is the result of the writers’ self-expression, their values and beliefs among other aspects, rather than an axiomatic reality.

Mental processes in the letters analyzed generated important characteristics such as: bringing evidence of ideological views and deriving specific types of argumentation, among others, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Now I further illustrate how, in order to support standpoints, writers use mental processes, among other grammatical choices.

Sensacional o título da reportagem sobre Augusto Pinochet: “O general em seu Labirinto,” em Manchete de 5/12. *Sei que não é invenção do redator da revista que o tomou emprestado ao Garcia Marquez. Mas não poderia ser mais preciso* (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).

I enjoyed the profile of the “Lion of Hollywood” Louis B. Mayer, who helped found Metro-Golding-Mayer. For most of us growing in the mid 1930’s in urban New York, Hollywood films were not only cheap entertainment but lessons as well (Time, Jan 4 1999).

I will forever *remember* not only as a wonderful asset to Jordan and the Middle East, (Newsweek, March, 15 1999).

Do you really *believe* that Queen Noor is “almost friendless” in Jordan? (Newsweek, March, 15 1999).

Acho que deveríamos neste momento refletir mais e não falar e escrever asneiras (Manchete, June 15 1999).

The examples above show that using mental processes the writers, Sensors of the processes “*sei, enjoyed, remember, acho*” express their feelings, and their world views, emphasizing the aspects they believe to be important in their argumentation (*not only cheap, not only as a wonderful asset*, for example). In the sentence, “*Do you really believe that Quen Noor is “almost friendless” in Jordan?*”, the writer is “asking” the Sensor (you/audience) to fill in a missing part of the message. Nevertheless, as Halliday (1985) explains, “Speakers have indefinitely many ways of expressing their opinion or rather perhaps, of dissimulating the fact that they are expressing their opinion” (p. 355). Therefore, the way such sentences are structured could encode the writers’ own standpoint at the same time that they may be contributing for legitimizing or naturalizing beliefs. In order to exemplify my hypothesis here are further examples of mental processes, chosen at random, used in two letters.

In the first letter the writer is defending his point of view about the music and carnival in Bahia, assuming that he is expressing the thoughts and beliefs of a group (“ninguém igual,” emphasized by the relational process “temos a convicção”). In the second letter the writer, talking about King Hussein’s acts, also takes his standpoint as a common sense assumption (“one,” “we all”).

Alguns saudosistas *podem achar* que já não se fazem mais Caetanos Velosos e Gibertos Gis como antigamente. Nós baianos, temos a convicção que a nossa música continua no pódio e o nosso carnaval ninguém *igual*, com licença da Portela e da Mangueira (Manchete, Nov 10 1999).

One cannot *overestimate* the importance of King Hussein’s decision to grant these stateless people what we all *take for granted*: a passport (Newsweek, March 5 1999).

Reiterating my argumentation, these examples with mental processes (*podem achar, iguala, overestimate, take for granted*) describe social realities but underpinned by the writers' world views. Using common sense assumptions (*we all, nós baianos, alguns saudosistas*) both letters seem to attempt to influence the audience's opinion in order to defend, possibly, personal interests.

Mental processes, as it can be noticed, also enable the writers of the letters to make personal comments and judgements as if they were shared by a group. In this sense, the individual voice of the writers, "their identity thinking" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 03) is expressed as if it were commonsensical. For example:

Todo mundo sabe (que sem a influência e generosa ajuda pecuniária) dos EUA, nenhuma ditadura teria se instalado na América latina. (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).

Acho que todo mundo tem o direito de errar (Manchete, Dec 12 1998)

Todo mundo sabe que o Paraguai especializou-se em falsificar *tudo* (Manchete, March 10 1998).

We should remember that any knowledge can be used for evil and for unethical purposes (Time, Feb 1 1999).

But *every true Londoner* thinks his city "more fair" and with a "mighty heart" as did the poet Wordsworth, when crossing Westminster Bridge one morning in the 19th century (Time, Jan 4 1999).

The mental representations of the world in the examples above signal to the fact that individual's discourses, in the form they are written, might take for granted some socio-cultural knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, as if they were "a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class," (See Eagleton in Chapter 2).

The Sensors, in the examples above, sometimes are unknown (*todo mundo*), or clearly stated (*we, every true Londoner*), but they all represent the writers' "voice," their subjective evaluation of the facts, their "identity thinking." In the letters analyzed there is evidence indicating that this is a characteristic of this genre. Such type of discourses which seem to embed personal claims and ideas can be considered ideological, according to Van Dijk (1999),

Ideologies, just like natural languages (or rather grammars),^{*} are not personal or individual, but they are essentially shared, social, and tied to groups, and regulating relations between groups or institutions. They tell us something about social structure, about power, dominance, inequality, or interests (van Dijk, 1999, p. 308).

Consequently, and reinforcing my point, the “individual” voices within the discourses in the letters to the Editor may embed a “natural language,” reflecting the patterns of behavior of a specific group. Therefore, ideas, thoughts, beliefs within the discourses may be socially shared by members of the writers’ community, and not only, as we may think, represent personal attitudes.

The last aspect observed in mental processes is related to the argumentation the writers use in their discourse. Heberle (1997), in her research on editorials of women’s magazines explains that such processes “characterize emotions and may be linked to one kind of fallacy in argumentation called “argument ad populum” (p. 123). In such argumentation there is “an appeal to popular sentiments, to emotions of the audience” (Walton, 1992, cited in Heberle, 1997, p. 123). And Heberle explains,

Mental processes in editorials of women’s magazines function as a technique of argumentation, for they are ultimately used to persuade a specific audience of women readers by means of emotion. The emotional appeals are presented through thoughts, wishes, beliefs, of the editors, readers and other members of the discourse community and are mostly expressed by mental processes” (Heberle, 1997, p. 123).

3.2.3 Forms of argumentation in mental processes.

Sotillo & Starace-Nastasi (1999) also investigate argumentation in letters to the Editor. In the letters to the Editor sent to two weekly newspapers of Bloomfield, four specific

^{*} Natural grammar, according to Halliday (1985), is explained by reference to “how language is used” (p. 01).

forms of argumentation were used: “Issue/Goal oriented,” “Ad hominem,” “Pontification,” and “Issue avoidance.” Among these forms of argumentation, “Ad populum,” “Ad hominem” and “Issue/goal oriented” seem also to be commonly used in the discourses of my corpus.

Argumentation “Ad hominem” deals with the “attacking of the opponent personally in one way or another, instead of responding to the actual arguments put forward by the opponent in support of a standpoint” (Eemeren, Frans H. et al., 1996, p. 63). For example,

You’ve got to be kidding! *Clinton and Starr?* One guy can’t admit to the truth, and the other spends millions of tax – payers’ dollars to prove a point that the American people don’t want anything to do with. We could have used that money for education or to feed the poor. (Time, Jan 18 1999).

Considero totalmente indecoroso esse affaire Luciana Gimenez/ Mick Jagger. Pra começar, acho que *esse cara* já devia ter se aposentado – em todos os sentidos. (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).

The writer in this example uses “one guy” and “the other,” referring to Clinton and Starr. In the mental process “admit,” the Sensor is “one guy.” As it can be noticed, the expressions “one guy/the other” (depreciatory) are used to attack and reproach both Clinton’s and Starr’s conduct, according to the writer’s point of view and evaluation. In the second excerpt the writer expresses directly her objection to the situation. She shows her disdain for Mick Jagger considering him “old,” in every sense.

Issue/Goal oriented forms of argumentation, according to Sotillo & Starace (1999), “are characterized by their specific lexical choices (verbal resources), such as the modals “must,” “would,” “might,” “should.” Modes of knowing in these arguments are displayed as beliefs (e.g. “I think”, “I suppose”) (p. 259). For example,

After watching the interview on 20/20 and reading your article, *I believe* that Monica is a very hurt, very confused woman who made a mistake – a mistake that many women have made before her. And though we tend to shun such woman and call them vixens, *I believe* this is a perfect opportunity to look at how these women actually feel, alone, scared and unloved (Time, April 5 1998)

I won't be hanging any picture of the Men of the Year in my Kindergarten classroom. Shame on you. How *could* you relegate baseball's Mark MacGwire to being just one of the several newsmakers? (Time, Jan 18 1999)

In the first example, Issue/Goal form of argumentation is established by the verbal choice "*believe*." The writer, as the Sensor of the mental process "*believe*" makes clear that he is expressing his own standpoint when referring to Monica as "*a very hurt, confused woman*." The "goal" the writer might want to achieve with the argumentation is to make the audience reflect about women's condition in society. Such position the writer assumes in the discourse may be derived, again, from his/her ideological "identity thinking" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 02)

The second letter uses the modal verb "*could*" in the construction of the Issue/Goal argumentation. The mental process "*relegate*" is softened by the verbal form "*could*," in the expression of the writer's beliefs. The "goal" in the argumentation of this letter is to promote the baseball player Mark MacGwire.

As shown above, most of the letters to the Editor analyzed seem to present different forms of argumentation. I could say that, in order to provide support for their standpoints, mental processes have enabled writers of the letters to defend, to make consciously or not, emotional appeals, and to attack specific and relevant issues raised in the letters. As already discussed, ideological standpoints may induce individuals to assume and to defend certain "identities" and "forms of thought motivated by social interests" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 02).

3.2.4 Relational processes.

The last processes analyzed are called "relational processes." Halliday (1985) explains that, "If material processes are those of doing, and mental processes are those of sensing,

the third main process type, that of relational processes, could be said to be those of being” (p. 119).

Relational processes are those which establish a relationship between the entities. They also represent “the most straightforward model for presenting a comment or a *judgment*” (Kress & Hodge, 1979, p. 113) (stress added). The presentation of comments and judgments, as already discussed, are significant in the letters to the editor because, according to Thompson (1996), “the choice of evaluation reflects and reinforces the ideological values of the culture” (p. 65). Thus, studying relational processes in my corpus has enabled me to focus on how the writers perceive and evaluate the world.

Relational processes, according to Halliday (1985), are divided in three main types:

- a) *Intensive*, when “the Carrier” (the entity which carries the attribute) has an attribute or quality ascribed, for example,

These people *were not visionaries*; they *were opportunists* who diminished the American quality of life while enhancing their own personal wealth (Time, Dec 28 1998)

I realized that for better or for worse, genetic engineering *is now a permanent fixture* in our life (Time, Feb 1 1999).

- b) *Circumstantial*, “it is similar to the intensive but it involves concepts like location, time, etc” (Thompson, 1996, p. 93/94). Example,

Having kids *is about* unconditional love, and life *is about* struggle (Time, April 5 1999).

- c) *Possessive*, when there is a relation of ownership (it can be also seen as a kind of attribute). Example,

You *have* a global audience (Newsweek, March 15 1999).

Each of these sub divisions intensive, circumstantial and possessive, comes in two distinct modes, “attributive” and “identifying” (Halliday, 1985, p. 119). A clause is considered identifying when one entity is used to identify another, as “Identified and Identifier,” and the order can be reversed. And the clause is attributive when there is a

quality (an attribute) of the participant. There is one participant, who is the “Carrier” (Heberle, 1997, p. 140). For example,

My name Identified	is relational process	Monica (Time 1998) Identifier
Monica Identified	is relational process	my name Identifier
The Salinas family members Carrier	are (not) relational process	white doves (Time 1999) Attribute

These examples illustrate relational processes,

Luciana é uma mulher maravilhosa (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).
 Having kids *is* about unconditional love, and life *is* about struggle (Time, Feb 1 1999)
 When my mother took my brother and me shopping before Christmas, *it was* most wonderful (Time Jan 18 1999).
 He *was* a great human being (Newsweek, March 15 1999).
 My name *is* Monica Thomas (Time, April 5 1999).
 He *was* a great human being (Newsweek, March 15 1999).
 Few societies *are* fully prepared for such unexpected shock. (Newsweek, March 15 1999).

As it can be seen in the sentences above, the use of relational processes contribute to show writers’ construction of their beings and beliefs. Thus, the Carrier (Luciana, kids, it, he, few societies), or the Identified (Monica Thomas), are entities presented through the writers’ world views. Consequently, in the expressions, “*He was a great human being,*” “*Luciana é uma mulher maravilhosa,*” “*it was most wonderful*” the selection of the words “*maravilhosa, great human, wonderful,*” etc encode, within their discourses, the writers’ “reality,” and subjective judgements.

The typical verb used in intensive relational processes, according to Halliday (1985) is “be.” In order to examine the frequency of the verb “To Be,” the most common in the ascriptive class of verbs in the letters analyzed, a computer program named MicroConcord

was used. The list below shows some examples of (is), the most frequent verb found in the letters,

1. call them vixens, I believe this case is a perfect opportunity to look at how t
2. ng your article, I believe that Monica is a very hurt, very confused woman who m
3. ed. What emerges from his description is a sort of emotional paralysis. A relat
4. is about unconditional love, and life is about struggle. But in the future, it
5. ife st valuable measures of human progress is a long and healthy life. It is more o
6. through various drugs. Having kids is about unconditional love, and life is
- 7 Lewinsky has any relevance at all, it is as the death knell of the public's bel
- 8 vity. What is supposed to be biography is diatribe. Schickel put a sinister spi
- 9 he reaction? It was "cool" (Mary). It is disgraceful that individuals on both s
- 10 ife. Its potential to benefit society is great. However, many have decided that
- 11 ives shows how ridiculous this process is [Dec. 28-Jan. 4]. Has any other American
- 12 What impresses me most about Monica is her candidness, composure, honesty and
- 13 Monica Lewinsky? "I know what she did is horrible, and I don't want to be mista
- 14 hin and especially between two men. It is like combat between God and the devil.
- 15 cared and unloved. (Tiffani). My name is Monica, and I am very upset because of
- 16 time I meet new people, I say "My name is Monica," and they say, "Monica Lewins
- 17 ogress is a long and healthy life. It is more often the genetic mishaps that en
- 18 cally unsophisticated young woman. She is not one of the people who hurt the co
- 19 tter or for worse, genetic engineering is now a permanent fixture in our daily l
- 20 ge far outstrips our comprehension. It is only with the grace of understanding
- 21 hip between two people, men or women, is only as good as the communication betw
- 22 rty than helping a customer. Delivery is prompt, items are correct. (Jill). One
- 23 nder his powerful regime? If Pinochet is really innocent, he should surely not
- 24 don't care if the Democratic candidate is Satan himself; I will not vote for a
- 25 soap-opera character, Monica Lewinsky is someone we all love to hate (March 15
- 26 od and the devil. But I won't say who is the evil one. (Lee) The fact that Bill
- 27 (Paul) It may be that Saddam Hussein is the one who will end up staying in pow
- 28 obile from Monica. (Brian). What's sad is the report from a friend who is still
- 29 chard Schickel write about Walt Disney is the equivalent of having the wicked s
- 30 have decided that genetic engineering is unethical and immoral. We should remem
- 31 quitted of a crime. What is happening is very similar to state prosecutor's tre
- 32 she couldn't have got to where she is without him
- 33 justice in his own country. (James). It is wonderful that scientists are finally
- 34 Suzana Alves é muito bonita
35. Lucian é uma mulher maravilhosa
- 36 Dr. Fritz, de quem a Manchete tanto gosta, é uma farsa
37. não é mais realismo fanático
38. é machismo praticado por mulher (e macho besta)

The examples above demonstrate that the relational processes are used to classify, judge or categorize entities stating values according to the writers' perception of the world. And the way the writers "sensed their worlds" was encoded in their discourses, in the lexicogrammatical choices they made.

As we have seen, transitivity, using Morrison & Love's (1996) definition, "refers to the choices a writer makes in expressing grammatically the representation of participants and their action" (p. 61). Thus, another important aspect noticed with the analysis of the frequency of the verb "be," in the MicroConrd program, is that writers seem to have chosen mainly "individual entities" (*he, she or it is/was*) rather than "collective ones" as the "Carrier" or the "Identified" of the social relation. Consequently, the argumentation in the letters studied is mainly related to one entity (a man, a woman or a fact), either to show the writers' approval and support or to criticize and deny the entity's attitude, behavior or value in society. Examples,

Saddam Hussein *is* the one who will end up staying in power and having the pleasure of challenging the American President (Time, Jan 18 1999).
 Mick Jagger *é* um homem casado (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).
 Ela *é*, sem dúvida, a rainha da axé music (Manchete, Dec 15 1999).
 I *am* amazed at her ability (Time, April 15 1999).
 He will *become* a shadow (Time, Feb 22 1999)
 I *am* unable to *feel* pride (Time, Feb 22 1999).

The examples above show that the writers refer to one entity (*Saddam Hussein, Mick Jagger, Ela*, etc), as the focus of their argumentation, and, frequently, as I have stressed, the descriptions or comments about these entities seem to be subjective. Thus, evaluations such as "*rainha*," "*the one*," "*amazed*," "*shadow*," among others, may represent subjective judgments based on ideologies and not descriptions of "real" facts.

According to my argumentation, then, relational processes, in the corpus studied, are relevant because through them it was possible to set up the relationship between the writers and the entities focused in the letters. The conclusion I obtained from my data is that writers of the letters identify people and things involved in some facts, mostly, in a subjective and personal way, through their "emotional filter." And Ideology seems to

scaffold their way of behaving giving them “action-oriented sets of beliefs,” an “identity thinking” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 02) through which they define their social subject position.

The fact that “reality,” in most of the letters analyzed, is presented through a personal world view is directly reflected in the way discourses are constructed. This aspect comes to corroborate Stubbs’ (1996) theory, which I presented in the earlier chapters proposing that discourses are never “*neutral and they use grammar to persuade.*”

Consequently, my conclusion is that writers of the letters to the Editor seem to appeal to the readers’ emotions manipulating their discourses, fundamentally, in order to persuade the audience about their “own reality” or their “world view.”

In this sense, relational processes as well as mental processes, in the letters examined, could be both characterized as important tools in signaling and establishing the writers’ ideologies, which seem to be responsible for the way the discourses of the letters have been constructed.

Concerning the first research question, “What kind of verb processes are most frequently used, in the letters analyzed to express the writers view of “reality”? The conclusion is: the analysis of transitivity shows that material, mental and relational processes are applied by the writers to shape their inner world. Relational processes, among the three, seem to be the most significant in achieving the writers’ aims as they classify people and objects enabling the writers to express their beliefs and thoughts. Therefore, they were the most frequently used.

The result from the investigation of the verbal forms (is/are/was/were/Be/e (é)/sao (são)/era/foi/foram/has and have), according to the MicroConcord program shows the verbs; “is” and “was” with a higher frequency, compared to the other verb forms, which might characterize relational process, including the ascriptive classes of intensive

attributive (Halliday, 1985) such as: “turn, grow, remain, seem, stay as, look, sound, smell, stay, fell, be etc” (p. 120). Frequency of “To be” was also higher than the equative classes of intensive identifying process, such as: *play, act as, function, serve as, suggests, imply, show, reflect*, among others which were analyzed (Halliday, 1985, p. 123). Data provided by the MicroConcord program shows that, in the letters studied, writers present the entities discussed using, extensively, relational processes.

Concluding my study on verb processes, I could say that it is through them, the relational processes mostly, that the ideological patterns in the letters to the Editor seem to be shaped. Next, I concentrate on personal pronouns as participants of different processes.

3.3 Personal pronouns as participants.

I have been arguing that particular choices from among the options of grammar and vocabulary are important to determine how ideological differences in the representation of the world are encoded in discourses. From these choices, another important aspect found in my analysis is related to the personal pronouns as participants of the processes because they represent “the world according to the speaker” (Halliday, 1985, p. 189).

In the 28 letters selected, the use of personal pronouns seems to create an important distinction in the social relationship established between the participants of the discourses by the male/female writers. The table below shows the result of such investigation.

Instances of Personal Pronouns found in the clauses		
	Male	Female
I	06	13
He	00	03
She	01	04
It	08	06
We	11	06
You	01	06
They	03	04

Table 3.4 Personal pronouns.

My explanation on pronouns will start with a concept which establishes that “pronouns in English have relational values of different sort” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 127). Therefore, taking the pronouns frequency list given above we can notice that male writers have used “we” as participants of processes with more frequency (eleven times) than female writers (six times). However, female discourses contain the personal form “I” in a higher number than the male ones. But what might differences in the choices of pronouns represent?

The use of the pronoun “we” as the participant of a process may suggest “homogeneity” thoughts, being “an effective discursive strategy for it suggests a united group against another one, probably they” (Heberle, 1997, p. 150). Thus, when using “we” the writers identify themselves as the spokesperson for a group. Consequently, ideas, thoughts, beliefs among others are taken as commonsensical. In other words, when using “we,” the writers may possibly assume that “their” standpoints are shared by a certain community. Reinforcing such aspect, Fairclough (1989) says, “There is always on the part of those who have power to try to impose an ideological common sense which holds for everyone” (p. 86). Thus, following this concept I could hypothesize that in the letters studied, at the same time writers seem to establish a relationship of solidarity with the

audience when using “we,” they may also hide their power in relation to their proposition, and in relation to the audience. For example,

1 bution to shaping our business world. *We all know better.* (Julius) 13. After rea
2 eople don't want anything to do with. *We could have used* that money for educati
3 s Unjustly caused her. (Dominick). 3. *We hope Monica* will share her royalties w
4 *we must look at ourselves. It's time we just left* her alone. (Paul). 4. If Le
5 ng that's unethical or ethical but make *we use* of the new development. (Andr
7 epresentatives voted to impeach. *Maybe we need* a new name for this body; the Ho
8 engineering is unethical and immoral. *We should remember* that any knowledge can “

In the examples above we can notice that the writers position themselves as the spoke persons of a group, expressing their views as if they were shared by that group (e.g., *we could, we hope, we just, we should, we must* etc). And although in some sentences the modal verbs (could, hope, should) minimize the intensity of the power embedded in the proposition, the writers' authority seems to be clear in relation to their argumentation.

Differently from using “we,” as the participant of a process, when using the first person pronoun “I,” the writers “limit the scope of the utterance” (Kress & Hogde, 1979, p. 92), at the same time that they may be assuming a different relation with the audience. Therefore, opposite to the “we” idea, the “I” pronoun makes the writers more distant in relation to the audience, signaling to a more personal evaluation or proposition.

Another important aspect to be presented in relation to the use of “I” as a participant of different processes indicates authority in relation to the “reliability” of the argumentation presented. In other words, the writer is explicitly the one who provides the information. And as a result the degree of his/her commitment with the standpoint is emphasized. For example:

I believe that Monica is a very hurt...
But I won' t say who is the evil one...
I read with interest your magazine...
I am very upset because of all the comments...
I believe this case is a perfect opportunity...
I won't be hanging any picture of your...

Analyzing the sentences above we notice that the personal pronoun “I” gives a clear and defined position to the writer in relation to his/her argumentation (*I believe, I am upset, I won't be hanging, I won't say* etc).

Frequency in the use of the personal pronouns “we” and “I,” participants of many processes analyzed, might reveal a significant contrast between male/female writers in relation to “solidarity,” and “authority” of the claims embedded in the discourse. Some hypotheses may justify and explain such frequencies: First, as Coates (1988) points out, men “are socialized into public discourse, women are socialized into private discourses” (Coates, 1988, in Heberle, 1997, p. 26). And in public discourse “we” seems to be the pronoun used to refer to the audience (Fairclough, 1989). Therefore, although female discourses are considered to be of more “solidarity” (Coates, 1995, in Heberle, 1997) than male ones, data provided by the analysis show that, in the letters to the Editor analyzed, male writers used more such type of approach with the audience in their discourse. For instance,

We should remember (Time, Feb 5 1999).
 Maybe *we* need a new name (Time, Jan 18 1999).
 But how *we* make use of the new development (Time, Feb 11 1999).
We must take the action (Newsweek Jan 18 1999).
We do not need 60-year old men leading our destiny (Newsweek, Jan 18 1999).
 What *we* are really witnessing is the vengeance (Time, Feb 22, 1999)
 Can *we* get past all the efforts to cloud the issue (Time, Feb 22 1999).

As it can be noticed in the examples above, the personal pronoun “we” represents the way the writers codified their world. And, in all these sentences, the writers refer to the inclusive “we,” “inclusive that is of the reader as well as the writer” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 127). Such type of construction is relationally significant in that it represents the writers, and the readers sharing the same problems. Thus, it might represent an attempt to establish

a “solidary” relationship between writers and audience. However, “we” may also encode another form of connotation: the “legitimization” of beliefs.

The analysis of the letters revealed, as explained before, that the frequency in the use of the personal pronoun “we” was higher in the male letters., which may support the hypothesis that male discourses might have tried to “impose more unity” to “their” ideas, thoughts or beliefs as if they were “ideas characteristics of a particular group or class” (See Eagleton Chapter 2). Such aspect might also encode a tendency to “*naturalize*” standpoints, crediting them to be “commonsensical.” And, naturalization, as explained by Fairclough (1989), is “the most formidable weapon in the armoury of power, and therefore a significant focus of struggle” (p. 106). Thus, male letters can be taken as a more ideologically structured type of discourses, although the use of “we” served also to soften the writers’ authority in relation to their proposition.

The results on the study of the personal pronouns in the letters analyzed may indicate that male letters, more than female ones, are more manipulative in relation to ideological discourses, because they have apparently tried to hide personal standpoints under the process of naturalization. Thus, the commitment in relation to the truthfulness of the proposition is more “distantiated” in male discourses. But why does naturalization hide ideological discourses?

In relation to this subject Fairclough (1989) explains that “when ideology becomes common sense, it apparently ceases to be ideology; this is itself an ideological effect, for ideology is truly effective only when it is disguised” (p. 107). Therefore, the more the discourse is assumed to be commonsensical and naturalized, the more ideological and effective it will be in its purposes.

Finally, the last relevant pronoun that appears in the letters is “*it*.” There is not much gender differences in relation to the use of such pronoun, however; it is observed with higher frequency in male letters.

As I have been presenting, the use of specific pronouns, among other aspects, establish a different relation between the writers and the arguments presented in their discourses. And Thompson (1996) explains,

Sentences can be graded according to how far the speaker overtly accepts responsibility for the attitude being expressed. Essentially, the speaker may express his or her point of view; or s/he may do it in a way that “objectivises” the point of view by making it appear to be a quality of the event itself (Thompson, 1996, p.60).

The analysis of the functions of “*it*” has shown that both male and female writers use “*it*,” in some clauses, to express their own personal opinion about a subject, but giving emphasis to the event itself, rather than “accepting” the responsibility for the attitude being expressed, as the examples below show:

It is wonderful that scientists are finally finding out the true medical and scientific value of medicine (Time, April 5 1999).

It is disgraceful that individuals on both sides of the impeachment debate ruined the life of Monica Lewinsky. (Time, Jan 18 1999).

It is simply astonishing how the Republicans succeeded in selling the project (Time, Jan 4, 1999).

The “*It*” pronouns in the examples above express writers’ points of view. As Halliday (1985) explains “speakers have indefinitely many ways of expressing their opinions – or rather, perhaps, of dissimulating the fact that they are expressing their opinions” (p 355). Therefore, writing the sentences as writers did (*it is wonderful*, *it is disgraceful*, *it is simply astonishing*), they “objectivized” their standpoints, hiding in such way their responsibility for the attitude being expressed.

As I have been arguing, personal pronouns in the letters analyzed have different relational values, which may lead, among other aspects, to establish different social attitudes and world views. Comparing the use of personal pronouns in male and female letters I conclude, by the result of my data, male writers “negotiate” their thoughts, and beliefs using a different approach to the audience. Thus, while women, in the letters analyzed, address the audience mostly making explicit the authority of their claims, men use common sense assumptions.

In this chapter I demonstrated how processes and participants are important to signal to possible ideologies hidden in discourses. In the next chapter I will show the importance of the lexical choices in the identification of ideologies in the letters to the Editor.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE LEXICAL CHOICES

In this chapter, I intend to investigate the following aspects: a) the relational value words may have in shaping “ideological discourses,” b) ideology and its possible influence in male/female discourses and in the establishment of identities in the letters to the Editor, and c) the elements, in the discourses of the letters, which might signal these identities.

Words do not have fixed and isolated meaning but they depend on the relationship with other words. “So instead of the vocabulary of a language consisting of an unordered list of isolated words each with its own meaning, it consists of clusters of words associated with meaning system” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 94). Halliday & Hasan (1985) also explain that “language is itself not only a part of experience, but intimately involved in the manner in which we construct and organize experience. As such, *language is never neutral*, but deeply implicated in building meaning” (p. 01) (stress added). Up to now I have tried to show, among other things, that the discourses of the letters are “elaborated” in order to achieve specific purposes, they are not neutral. But what are the aspects in the discourse which corroborates such hypothesis?

Words carry potential meaning, which can vary according to the writers’ lexicogrammatical choices and to the interpretation of the readers. And one way of opting for a particular meaning is derived, for example, from the readers’ ideological standpoint, as proposed in Fairclough’s (1989) definition,

Ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the texts, but as the background assumption which on the one hand lead the text producer to “textualize” the world in a particular way, and on the other hand lead the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way (p. 85)

But how do we “retrieve” the possible meanings of a discourse? How do we interpret them? It is through the “discourse analysis” of texts that we have tools to study the discursive elements of letters to the Editor, in order to understand their production, in specific contexts, and to enable their possible interpretations. Using Brown’s (1994) words we could also say that discourse analysis captures the reality that “language is more than a sentence-level phenomenon” (p. 235), showing that it is a variable of interconnected phenomena.

From the letters to the Editor analyzed, I can suggest that writers use “words” to construct and represent “their” reality; their social experience, values and beliefs, and to persuade readers about their standpoints. And writers, in order to achieve their goal, sometimes seem to manipulate discourses “excluding rival forms of thought, denigrating ideas, and promoting beliefs” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 05). For example,

Your selection of independent counsel Kenneth Starr and President Bill Clinton as Men of the year was the most perfect choice that you could have made. It was brilliant! (Time, Jan. 18 1999)

Bill Clinton and Ken Starr both on the cover? I’m surprised this issue didn’t self-destruct and take my mailbox along with it (Time, Jan 18 1999).

In future election, I don’t care if the Democratic candidate is Satan himself, I will not vote for a republican (Time, Jan 18 1999).

I believe this case is a perfect opportunity to look at how women actually feel: alone, scared and unloved (Time, April 5 1999).

In these excerpts, personal and subjective evaluations are expressed (*it was brilliant, I’m surprised, I will vote, I believe*). However, at the same time that writers highlight on

their own standpoint, they may also be reinforcing, denigrating, supporting or denying concepts and peoples' image.

In the letters analyzed, the meanings manifested in the processes of the structuring of the events, and the vocabulary choices used in the expression of standpoints seem to encode and determine hidden ideological views. In such a way, letters to the Editor could represent "loaded weapons"* as Carter (1987), explains

...lexis serves to mark evaluative elements in discourse and to encode the viewpoint and attitude a speaker adopts towards a topic. The observation that *language is a "loaded weapon"* and can be used for persuasive purposes and exploitative purposes is a not uncommon one; but there have been a number of studies recently which have sought for a more systematic account of the relationship between language and ideology (p. 92) (stress added).

This concept comes to emphasize current theories which establish that "ideological systems exist in and are articulated through language and can, therefore, be retrieved by language analysis" (Fowler et al., 1979; Kress and Hodges, 1981, cited in Carter, 1987, p. 92).

Evidence from the letters to the Editor analyzed shows that most of the discourses have an attitudinally marked lexis. And lexis, in the same form as the verbal processes already presented, seems to encode and "articulate" personal ideological positions writers adopt towards the subjects presented in their argumentation. Therefore, vocabulary choices and verbal processes have led me to the same findings: that the discourses of the letters to the Editor are ideologically loaded and persuasive because they might represent, mostly, "thoughts motivated by social interests," and the writers' social "identity thinking" (see Eagleton Chapter 2).

* The term "loaded weapon" was coined by Dwight Bolinger (1980) *Language: The Loaded Weapon*. London: Longman, in Carter (1987).

4.1 Nominal groups and attitudinal Epithets

The world can be encoded in clauses, and clauses according to Halliday (1985) result from a combination of three different structures deriving from distinct functional components (ideational, interpersonal and textual, as already presented). These three functional components of meaning are “realized through the grammar of a language” (Halliday, 1985, p. 179). Apart from the clause itself, there is a smaller grammatical unit called “*nominal group*,” which, as explained by Thompson (1996), “allows the widest range of meanings to be expressed” (p. 43). Thus, a nominal group can provide specification, in different ways, about the entities being presented. And such “specification” can be personal and subjective, based on the writers’ world view, in the “sets of beliefs” they adopt.

A nominal group can have three functional structures: *Premodifier*, *Head* and *Postmodifier*. For example,

The	real	danger (Time, Jan 18 1999)
Premodifier		Head

Temos aí	a massacrante	propaganda	sobre as loterias (Manchete, March 10 1998)
	Premodifier	Head	Post modifier

Among the functional elements which typically represent the nominal group (*Deictic*, *Numerative*, *Epithet*, and *Classifier*), I decided to focus mainly on the *attitudinal Epithet*. The reason for concentrating my choice on attitudinal Epithet is that differently from the *Classifier*, for example, which “indicates a particular subclass of the thing in question,” (Halliday, 1985, p.184), the attitudinal Epithet may “be an *expression of the speaker’s subjective attitude toward a subset*” (Halliday, 1985, p. 184) (stress added). Such aspect,

(“*subjective attitude toward a subset*”) seems to be fundamental to understand how the writers perceive, relate and encode the “world.” For example,

He was a *great human* being (Newsweek, March 15 1999).
 We also learned of her *intriguing* views on marriage (Newsweek, Jan 18 1999).
 Congratulations. Never before have I seen such a *fascinating contrast* of good and *evil* both within and especially between two men (Time, Jan. 18).
 The reason these two *hapless men* are in the news (Time, Jan. 18 1999).
 The *willing woman*, the *all-too-convenient tapes*, the *hoarded* DNA sample and the immunity from prosecution spell setup. (Time, Feb. 1 1999)

The attitudinal Epithets, (*great, intriguing, fascinating, hapless, willing, all-too-convenient, hoarded*) in the nominal groups above, contribute to express the writers’ own evaluation of the entities involved. Therefore, through the choice of these elements the information supplied seems to be qualified in a particular way, considered important to achieve specific purposes. Thus, taking the “Things” of the nominal groups above (*beings, marriage, contrast, men, woman, tapes, sample*) it is possible to verify that the attitudinal Epithets serve evaluate them (positively, or negatively) in order to “negotiate” the possible meaning the writers want to convey.

The difference between *Head* and *Thing* is that, the Head is used in the “Univariate” structure, and the Thing is generally used in the “Multivariate” structure. Univariate is a structure “generated by the recurrence of the same function: “ ” is modified “ ,” which is modified “ ” The type of structure exemplified by Deictic + Numerative + Epithet + Classifier + Thing + Qualifier we call Multivariate” (Halliday, 1985, p. 193). In other words, the Thing is described in the “experiential structure” of the nominal group, and the Head in the “logical.” For example (for an example with Head, see previous page),

Bill Clinton	the	most	perfect	choice
Thing	Deictic	Numerative	Epithet	Thing
Qualifier				

Attempting to bring evidence of the role of lexis as the “textualization” of ideologies in the discourses of the letters to the Editor, some basic theoretical preliminaries on Epithets and their collocation will now be explored.

According to Halliday (1985), the Epithet indicates some quality of the subset, e.g., old, long, blue, fast. This may be an objective property of the thing itself (for example, “*blond*” in the expression “*blond* girl”); or it may be an expression of the speaker’s subjective attitude towards it, e.g., *splendid* music, *silly* girl, *fantastic* show. Halliday divides the Epithets in two classes; the ones which are “experiential” in function, and potentially defining (*the long* train), and the ones which represent an “interpersonal” element in the meaning of the nominal group (p. 184), for example, *wonderful* train. For the purpose of my work, I decided to concentrate my analysis on the attitudinal Epithets, the interpersonal meaning, because experiential meaning was already presented and discussed in my analysis of transitivity.

Letters to the Editor, according to the data, contain several “attitudinal” Epithets, i.e., the ones which represent interpersonal relations. Such result was expected because, as it could be noticed, the letters studied seem to evaluate reality through the writers’ “subjectivity” i.e., the “way they [writers] make sense of their world” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 02). Consequently, when argumentation needs to be reinforced, writers emphasize the Thing of the nominal groups. And, one way of doing it is by using attitudinal Epithets. Some examples are the following,

We can make *wise judgments* about the use of knowledge (Time, Feb 1 1999).

Such *little wisdom* governs the world (Time, Feb 1 1999).

What was Nicole Kidman’s “risk” in appearing on a stage with the *hottest director* of the moment, Sam Mendes? (Newsweek, 18 1999).

Your cover could facilitate a rather *satisfactory game* of darts (Time, Jan, 18 1999).

Lewinsky is a very *immodest woman* (Time, April 5 1999).

In the nominal groups above, the attitudinal Epithets seem to articulate the “reality” of the Things described. Thus, in the sentence “your cover could facilitate a rather *satisfactory* game of darts,” for example, the attitudinal Epithet emphasizes the irony encoded in the writer’s personal evaluation of the *Thing*. In the same way, the attitudinal Epithets in italics “*little* wisdom,” “*wise* judgments,” “*hottest* director,” “*satisfactory* game,” “*immodest* woman” represent markers of the writers’ standpoints in the evaluation of the entities involved, the different participants of the processes.

The examination of Epithets, as is next discussed, shows that they are used to stress aspects in the arguments ascribed mostly to facts, and people involved in the argumentation (the Carrier, the Phenomenon, the Actor, the Goal). They are also written in order to make the writers’ point of view more effective. These elements were checked with the MicroConcord program. The list below shows some Epithets found in nominal groups

- 1 life of *Monica Lewinsky*, a decent if politically unsophisticated young woman. S
- 2 ars my father’s name and imprint. *No darkly driven, Scrooge-like character* coul
- 3 Congratulations. Never before have I seen *such a fascinating contrast of good and evil* both within and especially between two men (Bill Clinton and Ken Starr).
- 4 stresses longevity and seek to serve only to *the privileged few*. (Sean) Human e
- 5 her only crime was controlling *her own sex* life. Ordinarily, I would be critical of a newsman
- 6 his *powerful* regime? If Pinochet is really innocent, he should surely not be a
- 7 wledge. (Ken) Guess where *most of the genetically perfect kids*, developed as a result of gene insertion will go?
- 8 have *great empathy* for her and her family. She has paid her price, and now w
- 9 the people who hurt the country. *Her only real “crime”* was to insist on control
- 10 Londoners are so friendly with a *great sense of humor*.
- 11 d be that happiness will lie in *kids- only the perfect ones* – and in prescripti

The examples above show that attitudinal Epithets are used as pre and post-modifiers in the nominal groups. They express the writers’ “subjective attitude towards” facts, and people’s character, action or behavior. They also reinforce specific ideas, thoughts or beliefs necessary to support their point of view. Thus, attitudinal Epithets such as “*unsophisticated*, *darkly driven*, *Scrooge-like*, *fascinating*, for example, might be

considered the writers' "action-oriented sets of beliefs" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 02) in the evaluation of Monica Lewinsky, Pinochet, Clinton and Starr, people, and Kids, classified as "Things" in the nominal groups.

Sentences as the ones above may signal to the fact that ideology "offers a position to the subject" (Chapter 2), and according to it, writers try to articulate "reality" in order to reinforce or sustain their social values and thoughts. And, in such aspect lexical choices, especially attitudinal Epithets for describing people and facts, are crucial tools for encoding and decoding the ideological processes of the discourses. Here are some more examples of attitudinal Epithets in nominal groups,

Much like a soap-opera character, Monica Lewinsky is someone we all love to hate (Time, April 5 1999).

How many more hypocritical Republicans are going to be forced out of the infidelity closet (Time, Jan. 18 1999).

Luciana é uma mulher maravilhos (Manchete Dec. 12 1998)

populist politicians (Newsweek, Jan 18 1999).

young aggressive leaders with a fresh vision (Newsweek, 18 1999)

the willing woman (Time, Feb 1 1999)

People, as I said previously, were mostly characterized by attitudinal Epithets and nouns in the nominal groups. The examples above illustrate how through word choices the participants were presented and evaluated. Thus, "*soap-opera, character, unsophisticated, hypocritical, maravilhosa, populist, young, aggressive, woman,*" may represent "concepts" of thinking; the writers' "identity thinking" (See Eagleton Chapter 2). Therefore, such selection of vocabulary is not arbitrary and enables us to visualize how the writers manipulate their discourses to make them more effective and persuasive.

Objects and facts, in the same way as people, are also described in nominal groups, through a careful selection of words which articulate the writers' ideas and beliefs. For instance,

1 to cure *killer diseases*. If marketed legally and under the control these herbs
 2 they didn't get way by living in an *ugly and vandalized city*. London has always
 3 vies plus a cartoon and an *exciting weekly chapter of a serial*. What a *great program*
 4 n New York, Hollywood films were not *only cheap entertainment* but lessons as we
 5 as well. We safely watched *suitable family entertainment* and on Saturday after
 6 when the *real danger to the U.S.* was clearly in the Republican Congress! (Paul
 7 ing is now a *permanent fixture in our daily life*. Its potential to benefit soci
 8 the *equitable sharing of benefits*. We actively promote collaboration among all
 9 Ackroyd referred to London as an "*ugly, vandalized city*"
 10 *such little wisdom governs the world*

The examples above reinforce the fact that attitudinal Epithets in the nominal groups are used to express the writers' personal evaluation and standpoints. Thus, "*killer, ugly, vandalized, exciting, cheap, equitable, great,*" for example, stress the "Thing" discussed (*diseases, city, chapter, entertainment, danger, etc*). It is also important to realize here that at the same time such grammatical choices help to mark the writers' personal beliefs, they may also contribute to sustain, reinforce or articulate current ideologies. Such way of presenting the facts could corroborate Gee's (1990) theory which points out that,

What words (ought to) mean is not a trivial business (just words, just semantics) when these arguments are over socially contented words. Such arguments are what lead to the adoption of social beliefs and theories behind them, and these theories and beliefs lead to social action and the maintenance and creation of social worlds (Gee, 1990, p. 07).

Therefore, the lexical choices made on the use of attitudinal Epithet to emphasize the writers' argumentation may also suggest that, in most of the letters analyzed, discourses are not neutral, as discussed in Chapter 2, and they might contribute to establish or maintain "social worlds" (e.g., *real danger to USA, the countr's most pressing problem, intriguing views, permanent fixture in our daily life, etc.*).

The examination of attitudinal Epithets among the elements of the nominal group, merits closer critical analysis because it was mostly through them that the writers seem to construct and express their "sociocultural knowledge and social attitude" (van Dijk, 1998,

p. 307). Although I have stressed the importance of attitudinal Epithets, other elements within the nominal groups were also investigated. This is the next subject.

4.1.2 Nominal groups and Qualifiers

A *Qualifier* can be either a phrase or a clause and, according to Halliday (1985), it is a *Postmodifier* element, which “has the function of characterizing the Thing” (p. 188). But this characterization, as Halliday (1985) explains, is in “terms of some process within which the Thing is, directly or indirectly, a participant” (p. 188). *Thing* “is the semantic core of the nominal group” (p. 189). For example,

As	mulheres	objetos	estão	cada vez mais em alta (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).
	Thing	Qualifier		

Qualifiers may embed in their structures elements such as attitudinal Epithets and Numeratives which, again, may be used as markers of the writers’ subjective attitude and world views. Such characteristic helps to reinforce the relevance Qualifiers might have in the construction of ideological discourses. For instance,

He tought it *a sight touching in its majest* (Newsweek, March 12 1999).

I do admire *Monica for her self-centered, narrow view of the world* (Time, April 5 1999).

the raw sciences that stresses longevity (Time, April 5 1999).

End up with laws *that could hamper the breeding of improved crops* (Newsweek, Feb 12 1999).

You glorified *people who have become grotesquely wealthy* (Time, Dec. 28 1998).

Guess where *most of the genetically perfect kids, developed as a result of gene insertion,* will go? (Time, Feb 12 1999).

As mulheres objetos estão cada vez mais em alta (Manchete, Dec 12 1998).

In the examples of nominal groups presented above, Qualifiers, as it can be noticed, are used to describe or to define the “Thing” (sight, Monica, sciences, law, *people*, *mulheres*,

etc). However, as in the pre-modifier structure of the nominal group, it is through the choice of some specific elements in the post-modifier structures that the writers' personal evaluation seems to be mostly stressed. Thus, Qualifiers are essential to support the argumentation in an effective way and to construe the writers' "relations to a social structure" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 02). Qualifiers, in the corpus studied, are important elements because they seem to "frame" the writers' intentions in relation to the meaning they expected to convey when addressing to people (*Monica Lewinsky, Bill Clinton, Republicans, Raul Salinas, Pinochet*), and facts (*genetic research, elections, technology*), the main subjects of the letters investigated as already pointed out.

The last element in the nominal group which deserves a closer analysis is the Numerative.

4.1.3 Nominal groups and Numeratives

According to Halliday (1985), a "numerative element indicates some numerical feature of the subset: either quantity or order, either exact or inexact" (p. 182). In the letters analyzed, the study of Numeratives suggests that, in some nominal groups, they help to cause an impact on the message, strengthening specific aspects in the writers' argumentation. For example,

One of the least measures of human progress is a long and healthy life. (Time, Feb. 1 1999).
A fear most of us only dream about (Time, April 5 1999).
(Monica Lewinsky) She is not one of the people who hurt the country. (Time, April 5 1999).
Few societies are fully prepared for such unexpected shocks (Newsweek, 15 March 1999).
But every true Londoner thinks his city "more fair" and with a mighty heart (Time, Jan. 4 1999).
Such little wisdom governs the world (Time, Feb. 1 1999).

In the nominal groups above Numeratives such as "*least, most, one, few, every and little*" give emphasis to thoughts and feelings. Together with other word choices which

have strong connotation such as “*measures of human progress, fear we only dream about, unexpected shocks,*” they construct and articulate the writers’ world views, their values and beliefs in aspects related to “*humans, Monica Lewinsky, Londoners, societies and social relations.*”

Numerative research was also done with the MicroConcord program to verify the most frequently used and their collocation in the sentences. The result is presented below.

however, *many* have decided that genetic engineering
 how *many more* hypocritical Republicans
 who made a mistake *many* women have made before
 there must be *more* emphasis in the Medical research
 no sullen teenagers *more* interested in what happened
 priority would be to address *the country’s most pressing problem* (Newsweek, 18 1999).
 a clear distinction between the two *most* common beneficiaries
 the use of sustainable resources and *most* important the equitable sharing
much like a soap-opera character
 which proved to have *little* of substance behind it
 Serve to only privileged *few* (Time, Feb 28 1999).
Very immodest woman (Time, April 5 1999).

The results displayed in the examples show that the Numeratives were used in different functions in the clauses: 1) as pre-modifier, for example “*many* women have made before;” 2) as post-modifier, for example, “his city *more* fair;” 3) and Thing, example, “serve to only *few*.” However, its importance is largely noticed when, in the nominal group, the Numerative is in a slot closer to the attitudinal Epithet reinforcing its connotation. Such is the case of, “*many more hypocritical Republicans, most common beneficiary, most pressing problem, very immodest woman.*” Therefore, according to the ways in which Numeratives are placed in the structure of the nominal group of the letters analyzed, their purposes seem to be more persuasive and exploitative in relation to the writers’ argumentation.

With respect to the study of attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives, the analysis demonstrates that they are fundamental to the expression of the writers’ viewpoints. A nominal group, as already mentioned in the beginning of this section, “is the

grammatical unit which allows the widest range of meaning to be expressed.” In the letters analyzed, attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives seem to enable the writers to extend their argumentation beyond “language” to a powerful “discourse” (Chapter 2), in which they could negotiate their “social identity” and “live out their social relations” (Chapter 2).

Research on these lexicogrammatical choices was also important to corroborate theories which establish gender difference within written discourses. Arguing about such aspect Sotillo & Starace (1999) explain that “Language perpetuates societal construction of women and men and encourages both differences and dominance” (Pearson & Davilla, 1993, in Sotillo & Starace, 1999, p. 262). Thus, having in mind that language can permeate the visualization of gender differences, I tried to investigate how, in my corpus, the differences would be encoded in the discourses through the use of attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives. The result of my studies will be presented next.

Testing the hypothesis about gender differences I carried out an examination of “emotionality,” and possible “subjective evaluation” through the use of attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives, in 13 letters written by women (5,546 words), and 15 letters written by men (5,546 words), which could characterize these issues. The total amount of words checked in both letters were exactly the same to avoid differences in the “sample,” and consequently, in the resulting data. These letters have been chosen from *Time* and *Newsweek*. The result of the analysis is displayed below:

Instances of most frequent Numeratives found in the clauses		
	Male writers	Female writers
MANY	02	02
MORE	03	01
MUCH	01	01
MOST	05	04

Table 4.1 Numeratives

Total = 11

Total =08

Male writers	Female writers
Many have, many more, much spiteful, more emphasis, more hypocritical, more often, most about, most common, most important, most informative, most wonderful.	Much like, more interested, many women, many people, most of us, most of my, most of the, most personal.

Table 4.2 Examples of Numeratives found in the letters.

The results displayed above show that men used more Numeratives in their discourses. The quantifier analysis also revealed that such element, in the letters written by men, were sometimes used to stress attitudinal Epithets which can make the discourse more powerful.

Instances of attitudinal Epithets found in the clauses	
Male writers	Female writers
30	33

Table 4.3 Instances of attitudinal Epithets.

Male writers	Female writers
Fondest memory, earliest memory, Christmas people, animated puppets, joyful Christmas, happy shoppers, gentle dusting, great empathy, dime-worth difference, callous unwillingness, satisfactory game, fascinating contrast, spiteful opposition, infidelity closet, living hell, real danger, messy crisis, successful entrepreneurs, business world, permanent fixture, unethical purposes, privileged few, healthy life, human value, wise judgment, sustainable resources, equitable sharing, vital research, wicked stepmother, anti-Disney.	Soap-opera character, unexpected admiration, narrow view, own ground, great satisfaction, packing places, Christmas experience, perfect kids, horrific life, unconditional love, perfect ones, vandalized city, ugly city, mighty heart, smokeless air, great sense of humor, personal animus, sinister spin, Scrooge-like character, serious research, cheap entertainment, suitable entertainment, great movies, exciting chapter, great escape, confused woman, perfect opportunity, huge apology, pretty face, beguiling smile, alien conformation, normal equipment.

Table 4.4 Examples of nominal groups containing attitudinal Epithets

Although attitudinal Epithets appear almost in the same number in both male and female letters it seems that they were used for different purposes. In women discourses they were used referring mainly to “feelings” and “people,” for example, “*Scrooge-like character, perfect kids, perfect ones, confused woman, pretty face, beguiling smile, alien conformation, horrific life, unconditional love, mighty heart, narrow view, great sense of humor, personal animus, sinister spin, great satisfaction.*” In male letters, attitudinal Epithets and nouns referred mainly to “Things,” for example, “*spiteful oppositions, infidelity closet, unethical purposes, sustainable resources, vital resources, satisfactory game, messy crisis, business world, permanent fixture, unethical purposes, healthy life, equitable sharing, dime worth difference.*”

The ways people refer to “thing- oriented topics,” according to Lee (1991), are *less sensitive* than when discussing about “people- oriented topics” (p. 127) (stress added), or topics which express sentiments and feelings. For instance, the use of attitudinal Epithets and nouns in the letters analyzed may signal to the fact that female discourses tend to deal more with “people-oriented” topics describing their view “emotionally,” while male ones seem to refer mainly to “thing-oriented” topics examining and describing them in a “less sensitive” manner.

Contrastive analysis on Qualifiers in nominal groups, in male and female letters, was also done. The results on such findings are displaced below.

Instances of Qualifiers found in clauses and phrases	
Male writers	Female writers
14	13

Table 4.5 Instance of Qualifiers.

Male letters	Female letters
memories of Christmas, windows at Macy's department store, wonderland of Christmas, computer nerd at his desk, fabric of a new sweater, a new name for this body, the House of Misrepresentatives, a permanent fixture in our daily life, delivery of health care, sciences that stresses longevity and seek to serve only the privileged few, judgments about the use of knowledge, gene war between competing interests, all the players- local people and their governments, researchers and domestic and foreign pharmaceutical companies, laws that could hamper the breeding of improved crops, a man who made us laugh, who built an empire with his brother.	a fear most of us only dreamed about, view of the world, kids-only the perfect ones, drugs that costs a lot of money, his city more fair with a mighty heart, ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples, all bright and glittering in the smokeless air, a spin over every aspect of my father's life, work that bears my father's name and imprint, chapter of a serial, newsmaker of the year, a lesson in sportsmanship and humility, a mistake that many women have made before, a pretty face with a beguiling smile, substance behind it, beings with an alien conformation, people with the normal equipment

Table 4.6 Examples of Qualifiers in nominal groups.

The analysis above reveal that male and female discourses are similar in the frequency of the use of Qualifiers. Nevertheless, as occurred with attitudinal Epithets and Numeratives, Qualifiers, in female letters, were more used to describe people and feelings (*fear most of us only dream about, kids-only the perfect one, people with the normal equipment, beings with an alien conformation, mistake many woman have made, face with a beguiling smile*). Thus, the qualitative difference in the female discourses is not noticed in the amount of qualifiers used in the nominal groups but in the connotation such elements gave to the message; a subjective and emotional impact.

The results obtained from the contrastive analysis in elements of the nominal groups; attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numerative, in male and female letters show that these features are used with almost the same frequency. However, as discussed previously, female letters, in the corpus studied, seem to be more connected with subjective topics such as people and sentiments, supporting the hypothesis of “*emotionality*” as a possible mark in the female discourses.

Concerning the second research question, (What relational value do grammatical features such as Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives may represent in the letters

analyzed?), the analysis showed that such elements may be considered the “loaded weapon” (Bolinger, 1980, in Carter, 1987, p. 92) in the construction of the discourses because they increase, broaden, and strengthen the possible meanings words can have. Attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives in the letters analyzed are a vehicle through which the writer’s social and private identity seem to be encoded, and they are also the means that enable us to visualize them.

With respect to the third research question (Are gender differences salient or perceptible in the letters to the Editor?), analysis of the lexicogrammatical choices showed that there is a perceptible difference between males and females in their discourses. Social and personal identities men and women assume seem to give them different perspectives through which they relate and interact with the world, and consequently, in the way they focus and encode it.

Thus, Attitudinal Epithets, Numeratives, and Qualifiers, elements of the nominal group, as well as the choices of personal pronoun (Chapter 3), signal to the fact that woman writers, more than man writers, are more concerned and committed in relation to people and facts presented. And, emerging from their discourses, evidence of “emotionality” is slightly perceived.

I believe the study I have done in letters to the Editor on issues of lexicogrammatical choices is not enough to be conclusive to establish the extension which ideology might have influenced the writers’ discourses. Nevertheless, as explained by Stubbs’ (1996), “a corpus is a collection of utterances and therefore a sample of actual behavior. However, a corpus is not itself the behavior, but a record of this behavior” (p. 233). Therefore, I think the lexicogrammatical choices in the corpus analyzed signal that differences in male/female

discourses are “samples” of social attitudes resulting from ideological “sets of beliefs” which might be shared by a group or a community.

Concluding this chapter I will answer the last research question: “Are letters to the Editor a field of ideological struggle? Letters to the Editor represent the voices and world views of individual readers of the magazines. Sometimes the letters may represent the writers’ “disillusionment” or critique on aspects which have not fulfilled their expectations. The letters may also represent a support, an identification of the writers’ beliefs with the information given in the magazines. But, in both situations, the facts seem to be evaluated through the writers’ “social identities” which are established by their ideologies (Chapter 2). And discourse of the letters to the Editor is the means used to voice and shape their internal worlds, their struggle in accepting or denying current social realities.

In the next chapter, concluding this work, I will present a critical discourse analysis of two letters selected from “Manchete.” These two letters, one written by a man, and the other written by a woman, were sent to the Editor of the magazine, in December 1998, in order to express their standpoints in relation to the love affair between Luciana Gimenez, a Brazilian model, and the international British singer Mick Jagger. I decided to choose these two samples because the discourses of both letters explicitly show standpoints based on ideological evaluations.

CHAPTER 5

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TWO LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

“What persuades men and women to mistake each other from time to time for gods or vermis is ideology”
(Terry Eagleton, 1991, p.13).

In this chapter, I carry out a critical discourse analysis of two letters to the Editor. In comparing these two letters we can notice the antagonistic views, a man and a woman had, when looking at the same problem.

Luciana é uma mulher maravilhosa, seguiu os passos da mãe, de quem sou um antigo fã. Tal mãe tal filha. Ela herdou, além do talento, aquela boquinha carnuda que inspira as maiores loucuras. Achei legal, na reportagem da Manchete, o repórter Talis Batista não ter dado muita trela ao lado escandaloso que os tablóides ingleses tanto exploraram. Sim Mick Jagger é um homem casado. Mas e daí? Essas coisas acontecem. Somos humanos. O desejo corresponde a um instinto irrefreável, não é assim? É esta, pelo menos, a minha opinião. (Telmo, Manchete, Dec 12 1998).

Considero totalmente indecoroso esse *affaire* Luciana Gimenez/ Mick Jagger. Pra começar, acho que esse cara já devia ter se aposentado em todos os sentidos. Mas isso é problema dele. A expressão “mulher objeto” saiu de moda. Mas as mulheres-objeto estão cada vez mais em alta. Está na cara que a modelo deu um golpe certeiro em cima do roqueiro. Geralmente os jogadores são alvos fáceis. Elogie-se a sua competência. Só me preocupa o destino dessa criança que vem por aí e que não tem nada a ver com a irresponsabilidade dos pais. (Magdalena, Manchete, Dec 12 1998).

Analyzing the first letter we have the following characteristics: the evaluation of the fact, the love affair between Mick Jagger and Luciana Gimenez, by a male writer. The audience may guess that he probably expresses his standpoints based on his “world view,” in values and beliefs which he might consider “appropriate,” and “natural” within his social context. Traces indicating such “conclusions” might be signaled by the lexicogrammatical choices of sentences such as: “*Essas coisas acontecem,*” “*Sim, Mick Jagger é casado mas e daí? O desejo corresponde a um instinto irrefreável,*” used by the writer to refer to the love “affair.”

In the second letter, written by a female writer, we have the same situation but evaluated through a very distinct angle. Here again the readers may believe that she sees the “problem” under her world view. Hence she says: “*Considero totalmente indecoroso esse affaire,*” “*Mas as mulheres-objetos estão cada vez mais em alta,*” “*...acho que esse cara já devia ter se aposentado – em todos os sentidos.*” It is through the way the writers represented the world (processes and participants), as well as the lexical choices that it was possible to investigate and to lay bare how these differences in the world-view are encoded.

Analyzing these two letters we notice a discrepancy in the ways writers have problematized the fact presented, and encoded them in their discourses. But what might have occasioned such incompatible representations in their “world views”? What “social identities” do they assume in those letters? What social values and beliefs are encoded in words such as: “*mulher-objeto,*” “*jogadores são alvos fáceis*”? In the next pages I will try to answer these questions focusing on the ways these two specific discourses have been structured in order to achieve their purposes and to convey their message.

Discourses as the ones above may imply not only the writers’ personal point of view, but as we have seen before, they might embed current ideological patterns which are

responsible for shaping the behavior, values and beliefs of our society. And language, such as in the letters to the Editor, can be used as an instrument to manipulate “reality” and also, gradually, to enable social transformation.

Therefore, in the analysis of these two letters I will also try to focus on evidence which might elicit information needed to understand possible ideological structures of the discourses, and the way such structures may contribute to reinforce or to change social beliefs and values.

It is through the clauses of both letters that the writers seem to build their “values in social life” (Chapter 2). Their mental representation of the world, the “goings-on” are shaped through the forms; “the processes” they use to structure the grammar of their clauses.

Thus, in both discourses the participants are constituted, directly or indirectly, by: Mick Jagger, Luciana Gimenez, the writers, the editor, and the audience. The audience refers to readers of the magazine *Manchete*, “ideal” readers, because it would be difficult for the writers to know exactly the “actual” readers’ intertextual experiences. Therefore the use of statements such as “*geralmente jogadores são alvos fáceis*” or “*o desejo corresponde a um desejo irrefreável,*” might have the writers’ implicit assumption that the audience has already experienced such type of “discussion” in previous texts.

Happenings and relationships in the two letters analyzed are mostly encoded through relational, mental and material processes. In the relational processes the writers present Mick Jagger or Luciana Gimenez, for example, either as Carrier or Identified, both being involved in the happenings. But the happenings, as well as the entities involved, seem to be evaluated and judged through the writers’ “ideological identity.” Therefore, at the same time they write about the “external reality,” the presentation of the real facts, they also

leave traces, within their discourses, that they have simultaneously done it through their own “sets of beliefs.” For example,

(from the male letter)

Luciana é uma mulher *maravilhosa*
Sim Mick Jagger é casado. *Mas e daí?*

(from the female letter)

Está na cara que a modelo deu um golpe certo em cima do roqueiro
Geralmente os jogadores são *alvos fáceis*
Mas as mulheres-objeto estão *cada vez mais em alta*

Mental processes are employed in both letters for stating the writers’ particular standpoints, and their feelings about the subjects presented. And, in most cases, the “agency” of those processes is made “clear,” or explicit (e.g., *achei*, *considero*, *acho*). In other words, the Sensors of the mental processes used in the letters highlight the writers’ commitment to the proposition, and consequently to their ideological position. For example,

(from the male letter)

Achei legal, na reportagem da Manchete, o repórter Talis Batista não ter dado muita trela

(from the female letter)

Considero totalmente indecoroso esse “affaire” Luciana Gimenez/Mick Jagger.
Pra começar, acho que esse cara já devia ter se aposentado.
Só me preocupa o destino dessa criança que vem por aí e que não tem nada a ver com a irresponsabilidade dos pais.

Most of the agents of the processes are explicit, such as “*o repórter Talis Batista não ter dado muita trela*,” “*considero totalmente indecoroso*,” “*acho que esse cara*,” “*só me preocupa*.” Besides, lexical choices such as “*totalmente indecoroso*,” for example, reinforce the ideological “sets of beliefs,” the writer has in relation to the facts. However, as we can notice in the letters, agency is not always clear. And sometimes, the backgrounding of an agency might have ideological connotation. For example, in the sentence written by the female writer: “*Elogie-se a sua competência*,” the absence of the agency may have been

ideologically motivated, because what is written is contrary to what she really thinks. Therefore the female writer uses irony and obfuscates the agency.

Agency may also be attributed to a Thing. In the sentence, “*O desejo corresponde a um instinto irrefreável, não é assim?*” The construction of this process having an inanimate agent as the Carrier of the process, followed by a question, “*não é assim?*” might embed persuasive purposes by the male writer. Nevertheless, this question may also encode a request for “solidarity.” In this sentence again, the male writer seems to have been influenced by social values and beliefs in his statement.

The last important process found in these letters are the material processes. In the two samples analyzed, such processes do not have the same relevance as the ones presented before. Nevertheless, they also contribute for the organization of the writers’ internal and external experiences. Examples,

*Seguiu os passos da mãe, de quem sou um antigo fã.
Esse cara já devia ter se aposentado.
O lado escandaloso da história que os tablóides ingleses tanto exploraram.
Essas coisas acontecem.*

Material, relational and mental processes, in the letters studied, are used to encode not only information but the writers’ beliefs, sentiments and ideological standpoints. And these ideological standpoints are mainly reflected in the choices of the processes and participants of the clauses, emphasized by the lexicogrammatical choices. This will be my next subject.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, words may embed representations of the world; the way one perceives himself/herself, the universe, and the way he/she may establish his/her relationships in the social sphere. In this sense, words can be considered “nests of ideologies.”

Research on nominal groups, attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives, in these two letters, signal to the fact that such elements might be markers of the writers' "identity thinking," which in turn, might have resulted from their ideological "sets of beliefs." Examples,

Considero *totalmente indecoroso* esse "affaire."
 Mick Jagger é *um homem casado*. Mas e daí? Somos humanos.
 O desejo corresponde a *um instinto irrefreável*.
 Luciana é uma mulher *maravilhosa*,
 Ela herdou aquela *boquinha carnuda* que inspira as *maiores loucuras*.
 Mas as *mulheres-objetos* estão cada vez mais em alta.
 O repórter Talis Batista não ter dado *muita trel*.

In all these sentences we can notice that the choices of Numeratives, attitudinal Epithets and Qualifiers stress the writers' argumentation in relation to the entities they are focusing on. Qualifiers such as "mulher *objeto*" "*boquinha carnuda*," "*um instinto irrefreável*" and "*uma mulher maravilhosa*," for example, are expressions of the writers' subjective attitude toward the entities presented, and seem to be evaluations resulting from the position ideology offered to them.

Attitudinal Epithets, Numeratives and Qualifiers in the nominal groups are used to express ideas and also to stress the writers' standpoints. However, in emphasizing their argumentation, writers might be at the same time stressing, implicitly, ideological assumptions in relation to social beliefs, and values, and trying to persuade the audience in relation to their standpoints.

In both letters the writers use argumentation Issue/Goal oriented (Chapter3). Thus, in the sentences "*Achei legal*," "*É esta, pelo menos a minha opinião*," "*Considero totalmente indecoroso esse "affaire*," the writers make clear that they are referring to their beliefs. The second letter also encodes argumentation "Ad hominem." For instance, "*Pra começar, acho que esse cara já devia ter se aposentado em todos os sentido*," "*mas as mulhers-objeto*

estão cada vez mais em alta,” show that the female writer is directly attacking Mick Jagger and Luciana Gimenez. Pejorative Qualifiers such as “*alvos fáceis*,” “*golpe certo*,” and the Numerative “*todos os sentidos*,” for example, signal this form of argumentation.

The social identity the writers might have constructed in their discourses is another relevant aspect evidenced in these letters. According to Fairclough (1995), “Two processes are always simultaneously going on in texts: the construction of identities, and the construction of relations” (p. 125). In the study of these letters, I have noticed that writers simultaneously establish their social and personal identities. But how could language in the letters project these identities?

As we have already seen, the lexicogrammatical choices were the vehicle used to describe how, through an ideological point of view, the writers seem to make “sense of their world,” and construe their “identity thinking.” Nevertheless, an individual influences and is influenced by a social group. For instance, discrimination, oppression, opposition, among other social relations embed in an individual discourse might tell us something about social structures, and socially shared assumptions. And this is why the discourse analysis in letters to the Editor is relevant.

The most important aspect related to the analysis of the identities in the letters was to bring evidence that the individuality of both writers could encode and reflect characteristics of a social group; their ways of thinking, their values and beliefs. Therefore, writers of the letters to the Editor would be “ordinary people,” belonging to a social group using the same ordinary language of that group, and sharing their same ideologies when making comments and evaluating a situation.

Thus, expressions such as “*O desejo corresponde a um instinto irrefreável*,” “*Somos humanos*,” and “*Mick Jagger é casado. Mas e daí?*,” although being the evaluation of one

single writer, these sentences could embed “characteristic of a particular group or class,” bound to ideas of male and female behavior which are culturally constructed.

In the same way the sentences, “*Ela herdou, além do talento, aquela boquinha carnuda que inspira as maiores loucuras,*” “*Mick Jagger é um homem casado. Mas e daí?*,” “*Essas coisas acontecem,*” seem to demonstrate patterns of thoughts in relation to the sexual role men and women have in society. This particular way of structuring the experience, then, would be the “forms of thought motivated and structured in social life” (Chapter 2), encoding possible current ideologies. Therefore, as language “plays an important role in structuring our experience of the world” (Lee, 1992, p. 250), sentences such as the ones above could give us traces to interpret not only the male writer’s social identity, but also the social context he belongs to.

Moving to the examination of the second letter, we will notice that aspects related to the role of men and women, their behavior, and attitude in our society, seem to be more emphasized by the female writer. Thus, choice of depreciatory words such as: “*affaire,*” “*mulher objeto*” (*mulheres objetos*), “*alvos fáceis,*” “*golpe certo,*” “*esse cara,*” “*deu um gole,*” has the potential of stressing the writer’s feelings and world view; the preconceptions she might have in matters such as the roles men/women have in society. And her standpoints are reflected in the evaluation of the situation, in the way she focuses the “reality” of the world.

This aspect might contribute to corroborates Simpson’s (1993) theory (and the aspect of “neutrality in discourse,” discussed in the previous chapters) that, “particular linguistic codes embody particular realities, then nothing in language can be regarded as truly objective or neutral” (p. 108). Consequently, her discourse, besides the possibility of reflecting social patterns of behavior, may also embed persuasive ends.

Another identity the writer of the second letter may have assumed is raised in the following sentence: “*Só me preocupa o destino dessa criança que vem por aí e que não tem nada a ver com a irresponsabilidade dos pais.*” In this sentence the “female” writer has possibly identified herself with the role women are supposed to have in society regarding motherhood. Thus, the female world view is presented as a woman’s claim, in the voice of an ordinary woman who is worried about the future of a child, and who blames the parents’ behavior. The writer, in this last sentence, has probably used the reader’s emotions to make her arguments more effective.

Contrastive lexicogrammatical analysis of these two letters have signal to the fact that they present the “world” focusing opposite views. Editors have also played a crucial role in selecting letters with such a contrary focus. However, it was probably based on their own ideologies, their mental representation of “sociocultural knowledge or social attitude” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 307), that they opted for such male and female “word views,” and types of discourses.

A structural analysis of the discourse patterns in these two letters demonstrated that the same fact was interpreted through different perspectives. Such antagonistic discourses may have their roots in the ideological position each of the writers have assumed, as being their private and social identities.

In both discourses we have instances where the writers clearly assume their commitment with the “truth” of the proposition. For example: “É esta, pelo menos, a *minha opinião*,” “*Só me preocupa o destino dessa criança que vem por aí e não tem nada a ver com a irresponsabilidade dos pais, (eu) considero*” etc. Nevertheless, there are sentences in which writers do not make themselves explicit. Such constructions occurs, mainly, when the writers seem to be trying to justify their standpoints. For example,

Essa coisas acontecem.
Luciana é uma mulher maravilhosa.
Mas as mulheres objetos estão cada vez mais em moda.
Geralmente os jogadores são alvos fáceis.

Presenting their arguments in such ways, both writers have sometimes softened their authority in relation to their assertion, therefore, uncovering any persuasive end their discourse might have had. Nevertheless, choices of transitivity, Epithets, Qualifiers and Numeratives seem to have made argumentation more effective, appealing and consequently, more persuasive in terms of “naturalization of ideas.”

I have examined, in these two letters, how the writers encoded their world-views through the lexicogrammatical choices. According to Halliday (1985), “Society, language and mind are indissoluble: society creates mind, mind creates society, and language stands as mediator and metaphor for both these processes” (p. 31). Consequently, the same event reported in these two letters has been presented and evaluated in a different perspective, possibly because “society creates mind” and the writers have been influenced by a social way of thinking and behaving.

CHAPTER 6

FINAL REMARKS

“Texts, spoken and written, comprise much of the empirical foundation of society: they help to construct social reality. And textual analysis is a perspective from which to observe society; it makes ideological structures tangible”
(Michael Stubbs, 1996, p. 20).

As shown before letters to the Editor constitute a space in the magazines which provides to the individuals the opportunity to express their affection and disaffection in relation to facts already published in the media. The letters represent “the contribution of an individual, private reader-writer, with no influential status” (Morrison & Love, 1996 p. 67). Nevertheless, at the same time, “each discrete LE (letter to the Editor) text is individual, a corpus of LE is a discourse site which provides a *cumulative image of the concerns of the non-elite*” (Morrison & Love, 1996, p. 67) (stress added). And, “providing a cumulative image of the non-elite,” such letters could gradually contribute to social changes.

In order to support my hypothesis that ideology is responsible for the way discourse is structured in letters to the Editor, I concentrated my research on the lexicogrammatical aspects of transitivity as well as on attitudinal Epithets, Numeratives, and Qualifiers.

The investigation of transitivity demonstrated that the writers represented their “mental picture of the world” using, mainly, relational process. In such process, Carriers, in the corpus analyzed, were mostly explicit entities, and the Attributes were frequently used as a form of judgment, that is, the writers’ subjective evaluation of the entity focused. Such

aspect also corroborates the fact that the discourse of such genre could be manipulated in order to make the writers' argumentation more effective and persuasive.

The analysis on argumentation showed that three forms were used in the letters selected: "Issue/Goal oriented," "Ad populum" and "Ad hominem." Using these forms of argumentation writers of the letters made their claims either attacking the entities focused, exposing their beliefs in relation to the facts, or appealing to the reader's emotions.

The aspect of argumentation was not broadly focused in this study. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest, for further research in this genre, more investigation on this subject, because of its relevance. The analysis of argumentation in letters to the Editor may become a tool for establishing the social behavior of the members of a specific community in relation to the way the discourse is manipulated to convey their thoughts, and also to achieve their purposes.

From the most important lexical choices found in the letters, attitudinal Epithets, Numeratives and Qualifiers were analyzed. The investigation of such elements demonstrated that the letters to the Editor studied presented traces of persuasive discourse. Therefore, attitudinal Epithets as well as Qualifiers for example, were frequently used to produce, or reinforce the writers' appeal. In the same way, these lexical choices also signaled to the fact that the discourse of such genre is not "neutral," but it is produced to achieve specific purposes and effects; to persuade the audience about the writers' standpoints. And these standpoints seem to be dictated by current ideologies which could be derived from the writers' social community.

Another relevant aspect discussed in this thesis is related to male/female writers' concern toward different "sets of beliefs," "social identity," and "social attitude" among others, and how these sets are represented in language by means of the selection of words and grammar

in the structuring of the writer's discourses. For further research, letters to the Editor could be analyzed more specifically regarding gender issues, such as the investigation of which topics and which lexicogrammatical features are preferred by women writers and whether there are in fact substantial differences regarding male and female texts.

I have demonstrated in my research that discourse analysis is an important tool for the investigation of ideology, through a close analysis on transitivity and some lexicogrammatical choices such as attitudinal Epithets, Qualifiers, and Numeratives. However, due to the limitation of my corpus and study I am aware that the data and evidence obtained only represent a small contribution in the complex and vast field of ideology and discourse.

Concluding my research I could say that letters to the Editor are important sets for the investigation of ideology because as analysis signal, in the process of expressing personal and subjective thoughts, readers may also show the inequalities, power and interests which scaffold the social relations, and which seem to be shared by social groups and classes as naturalized beliefs. Letters to the Editor, as most of the news publications, might also contribute to influence opinions, change the course of events, obscure, denigrate and legitimize "sets of beliefs" which are embedded in the "sociocultural knowledge and social attitude" of current ideologies.

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APPENDIX

BettyS9999@aol.com, 18:08 13/07/99 ED, Your questions about TIME's Letters

From: BettyS9999@aol.com
Date: Tue, 13 Jul 1999 18:08:18 EDT
Subject: Your questions about TIME's Letters to the Editor
To: ingrid@cce.ufsc.br

Dear Ms. Fontanini:

Here are answers to your questions about TIME's Letters to the Editor columns.

1. How do we select the letters? Generally we always try to fill the first section in the letters columns with mail responding to the cover story we have run in a particular edition. Letters that provide additional information, and those that give a personal response to an issue we have raised are among those that we most favor. Letters with lively language and interesting writing are also attractive. And when readers give us an erudite quote on the topic, that is appreciated as well.

2. How many letters? We get about 1,500 letters a week. (In that count are included letters via regular postal system, faxes and e-mails.)

3. How many people help select the letters for publication? Two people. I have an assistant editor who makes the first run-through of the mail, and then I as editor of the column, make the final choice.

4. Do men write more than women? We do not keep statistics on the gender of letter writers, so I have no answer to this question.

5. How many copies of Time are sold? Time has a circulation of 4.4 million.

Additional points of interest. In our domestic letters column we publish approximately 25-30 letters a week. so you can see that out of 1,500 letters we get each week, a good many do not make it into the magazine.

Time has 11 editions. The letters columns in the international editions are tailored to what has been published in a particular edition. We try to include letters from Canadian readers in our Canadian edition, from Latin

American readers in our Latin American edition, etc.

The Letters column is also the place where we publish corrections for the magazine.

The letters that are published in the column are not a statistical reflection of how readers feel about an article. For example, we might get 50 letters objecting to a story and 10 favoring it. But for balance (and interest) we might publish a total of 8 letters, 4 positive and 4 negative). We strive for an interesting contrast of views--not a poll on how readers feel. It is also worth noting that readers who disagree with a story are much more likely to write than those who agree with the article. Human nature seems to dictate that readers want to express their opposition, while those who agree are content to remain quiet. Hope this helps with your thesis. Best wishes. Betty Satterwhite, Letters editor, TIME